

Drago's Revenge

by sonicking2004

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Summary: When Drago Bludvist attempted to force Toothless to kill Hiccup, Stoick the Vast found a shield that allowed him to save Hiccup's life, allowing his son and his dragon to drive Drago and his Alpha from the nest. Now the shield and the title of Chief have been passed down to Hiccup, but is he prepared for when Drago comes to finish what he started? Follows "The Shield"

1. Chapter 1: The Ambush

****The Ambush****

This is Berk. Here on this damp hunk of rock we enjoy two lovely different climate types throughout the year: cold and dry, and cold and wet. The one main thing that makes living here enjoyable at all is our mode of transportation.

Now most places you might see others riding on horseback or in wagons pulled by oxen. If we have to travel a considerable distance then we might sail in ships like our ancestors had for centuries. Our main choice for getting from point A to point B, however, isâ€¦.dragon riding!

_I know what you're thinking, "Riding on the back of something that flies, breathes fire, and can eat you? You're crazy!" But the simple fact is that we're Vikings, that's pretty much the definition of 'crazy'. Of course most other Vikings also think we're crazy for befriending the ancient enemy that they've hunted for generations, but seven years ago I found out that dragons were simply misunderstood. While they were to be treated with respect, I learned that if we approach them correctly then they could be the greatest of companions, and eventually I'd brought my entire village around to my way of thinking. _

_For the next few years I spent most of my time learning all that I

could about them, and whenever anyone had any questions about their new dragon friend they would come to me. For a while I came to think myself the greatest dragon expert around. And then I met my mother. Yeah, turns out that while everyone believed that she had been killed by a dragon when I was a baby, she had actually spent the next 20 years living with them, learning secrets even I had yet to discover!

—

_I don't really miss everyone always coming to me for dragon advice, however, as I have new responsibilities now. You see, the day that I found my missing mother (and Berk got a huge dragon population boost thanks to our liberating them from the cruel control of Drago Bludvist) was also the day that my father Stoick the Vast retired as Chieftain of Berk and I took his place. Thankfully he still lives with us in the village so I can come to him for advice, along with my mother who is always willing to impart her dragon knowledge onto me.

—

When I think of how the battle with Drago might have gone differently had Dad not found that shield that day, I cannot help but shudder. Now he's passed the shield on down to me, as it was "too small" for him. Of course I've learned some neat tricks with this strange shield, though nothing that I feel is all that useful, but seeing as how handy it came in against Drago I still keep it with me all the time.

So that's how I spend my days most of the time these last two years, either running the village, learning from my Mom and Dad, or trying to unravel the mysteries of this shield. Today, howeverâ€¦|.

* * *

><p>"Where is that boy!?" Stoick barked grumpily as he paced quickly back and forth across the grand hall.

"Stoick, calm down," Valka chuckled at her agitated husband.

"Calm down?" Stoick asked her in disbelief, "Valka, I had our whole day planned today! We were to go and fill the orders at Gobber's, then we had that important meeting with the other Chieftains before we went out on a patrol to make sure Drago's trappers weren't getting into any mischief, but before I could tell him any of that he tells me he'll be right back, then he takes off without letting me know where he's off to!"

Valka lays her hand tenderly on Stoick's face, which seems to have an immediate soothing effect, as she says, "Dear Stoick, I know it hasn't been easy adjusting to being retired, but you have to understand that our son is the one who is Chieftain now, not you."

Stoick sighs as he looks into her eyes, then he continues less heatedly, "I know, but that's precisely why he needs to be here at the village, not running off who knows where."

"Well he's been very good about taking his Chieftain duties seriously these last two years, so I think that he deserves a half-day off at least. Also I'm guessing that he left on Toothless, and you know how fast that dragon is, so if Hiccup said he'll be right back then I'm sure that he'll be true to his word," Valka reasoned as she

straightened out Stoick's outfit, "Besides, I recall that around 23 years ago you had left your father in the lurch to have a certain talk with me."

Stoick looked stunned, as if he hadn't thought of that possibility, "You don't think you don't suppose that's what Hiccup's off doing now, do you?"

"He better be," Valka responded, looking as though she was starting to get agitated herself, "If he doesn't even bring it up today then _I_ might have to have a talk with our son _myself!_"

Stoick chuckled under his breath as he said kindly, "Now who needs to calm down?"

"You're right," Valka conceded, "It's just that I'm not getting any younger, and our life expectancy is not all that high to begin with. I'd just like to have some grandkids while I'm still young enough to enjoy them, and he's kept that girl waiting long enough as it is."

"I wouldn't worry too much about Astrid, love," Stoick said as he brought Valka's hand to his lips, "If strength of will translated into strength of arm, then she'd be able to take on all of Berk and her dragons without breaking a sweat. Trust me, she won't be one to let Hiccup string her along even if he was someone who would do so. Anyway, I do hope that he takes care while he's out there. Although we've heard no word of him these last two years, I have no doubt that Drago is still alive and out there somewhere. Who knows what he's planning this time."

* * *

><p>Hiccup paced back and forth on the shore of the archipelago, nervously fiddling with a ring in his hands as he muttered to himself, " 'and because we are such a good team, getting married is only the next logical step.' No, no, that's no good, makes it sound like some sort of business arrangement. Maybe 'Astrid, I cannot imagine my life without you. Would you please marry me?' Ugh, sounds like I'm begging. I wish I had talked about it with my mother before I left today."<p>

"You wish you talked about what with your mother?" Hiccup heard Astrid say unexpectedly from behind him, startling him so badly that he jumped and tossed the ring into the air, though he managed to catch it quickly enough and stowed it into a compartment on his flight breeches before turning towards Astrid and saying in a nervously broken tone, "H-hi, Astrid. Thanks for coming today."

"Of course, but what's got you so nervous, Hiccup?" Astrid asked him in concern, then a dawning look appeared on her face as she guessed, "Oh, your father didn't give you a hard time about just hanging out today, did he?"

"Not really," Hiccup said truthfully, then he expanded, "Fact is I didn't give him the chance. I just ran past him saying I'd be right back, then took off on Toothless before he could get a word in edgewise."

"Oh, I didn't realize that we were playing hooky today," Astrid said

as she looked down at her feet, her face reddening with the onset of a blush.

"We're not, not exactly," Hiccup gently corrected, "When I told Dad that I'd be right back I meant it. It's just that between running the village, going out on patrols, and learning the finer points of being a Chieftain and a dragon rider, it seems that we hardly get any time for ourselves. I just thought it wouldn't be unreasonable to steal away for a couple of hours, just to talk about some things."

"Oh, you asked me to come to talk?" Astrid asked uneasily, a look of trepidation in her eyes.

"Don't worry, it's a good talk," Hiccup said assuredly, apparently taking strength in comforting Astrid as he sat down on the mossy ground and gestures for her to do the same, "At least I hope it will be."

"Okay," Astrid said as she settled onto the ground next to him, taking a deep breath as she continued, "so what did you want to talk about?"

As Hiccup glanced over at Toothless frolicking with Stormfly, Hiccup wondered how he could make this look so easy as he took Astrid's hand in his and said, "Astrid, we've known each other for quite a long time. At least I feel like I've known you for a long time as I've had a crush on you for as long as I could remember, though before Dragon Training I wasn't sure that you knew I was alive, which is why I wanted to learn to kill dragons in the first place. To get you to notice me, that is."

"Oh, I noticed you alright. I was always on the lookout for you in order to stop you from messing up mine or anyone else's job," Astrid said teasingly, "Although I must admit that, before you and Toothless opened my eyes, if you asked me out on an outing like this I would have punched you in the arm so hard you wouldn't have been able to use it for a week."

Hiccup chuckled at the reminder of how Astrid used to be, then he rubbed the back of his neck as he said, "Averted physical violence aside, a lot of things have changed since then, and while I now have more friends than I know what to do with, you are the one that is most dear to me."

"Thanks, Hiccup," Astrid said as she smiled tenderly, "I feel the same way about you."

"I'm glad to hear that, because there's something I want to ask you," Hiccup said as he shifted his position from sitting beside her to kneeling before her, and her eyes widened as he took her hand in his and continued, "I know that traditionally we are supposed to go through our fathers first, but I wouldn't feel right unless I asked your thoughts on it first. I wouldn't want to try and pressure you in any way to do anything that you weren't 100% sure of."

Astrid gaped at him but said nothing, barely managing a small nod before Hiccup continued, "When I see how much happier my father is now that Mom is back home, I cannot help but think that what you are like for me. In fact, there is no one that I'd rather spend the rest of my life with. Astrid Hofferson, would you do me the great honor

ofâ€| "

Hiccup is interrupted by the sound of a deep rumbling growl barely three feet from him, and both Hiccup and Astrid were startled to see that Toothless and Stormfly were growling in their direction. At first Hiccup was worried that something was wrong with Toothless, then he noticed that the dragons weren't looking at them but rather past them. Also, Toothless was glowing from within a bright blue that shone through his scales and especially within his mouth and spine ridges, and Hiccup had seen Toothless like that only one time before! Standing quickly to face in that direction, Hiccup saw edging around the rock cliff in the distance a large, menacing figure he knew all too well, a man who chuckled and said in a mocking, apologetic tone, "I'm sorry. Was I interrupting something?"

"Drago," Hiccup said in a low, even tone as he drew his shield and fiery sword, and Astrid did the same with her axe, "what brings you here?"

"Oh, much the same as you, I imagine," Drago said with a smile that held no warmth, "It's just a beautiful day today, just perfect for proposing to a special woman, or for enjoying the sweet taste of revenge."

As he spoke, Drago's Bewilderbeast, with its left tusk broken, rose up out of the ocean behind him. Drago chuckled then and said, "You know, I'd heard about you becoming Berk's Chieftain, and so I figured I'd have to finish building my forces back up to what they were before in order to attack Berk and draw you out into a one on one duel; man to man, dragon to dragon. But then you went and obliged me early when you headed out to this archipelago."

"Well, in case your waterlogged brain had missed it, Hiccup's not exactly alone here," Astrid said as she twirled her axe in her grip, "and I'm not exactly some helpless damsel in distress."

"Of course, my lady, I apologize," Drago said with a bow, then he straightened again and bellowed as he twirled his hook-spear in the air, then he used it to point at both Astrid and Stormfly.

"That's not going to work," Hiccup chided him, "Our dragons recognize Toothless as theâ€| " But then Hiccup saw that Astrid was not staring at the Bewilderbeast but rather something that was past it. Following her gaze, Hiccup saw a glowing blue streak heading their way fast.

"Flightmare!" was all Astrid managed to say before the speedy dragon swooped into their midst and saturated Astrid and Stormfly with its breath. Toothless unleashed some shots at it, but the Flightmare flew off again just as quickly, leaving Astrid and her dragon frozen where they were standing.

"You lousy, stinkingâ€|!" Hiccup growled angrily at Drago as he pointed his flaming sword at him.

"Calm yourself, boy," Drago admonished him, "Surely such a great 'dragon master' as yourself recognizes the brilliant beauty of the Flightmare?"

"Of course," Hiccup acknowledged, for he'd seen one years before,

when Astrid went off to challenge it to try and restore the honor of her family name.

"Yes, then you should know that its breathâ€¦" Drago started to explain before Hiccup interrupted, saying, "â€¦contains a venom that instills a temporary paralysis on its victims that can last around 2 minutes, depending on the dosage received."

"Ah, so you have been studying," Drago smirked at him, "Good. Well I promise I will not personally harm her, so long as you accept my challenge. Just you and me. Your Night Fury can dance with my Bewilderbeast all he wants, but if he tries to help you in your duel then I _will_ finish her off myself."

Toothless growls angrily at Drago, but then Hiccup turns to Toothless and says, "No, bud, we can't take the chance." He then strides over and locks Toothless' tail fin into position, saying as he points his sword at the Bewilderbeast, "You take care of the big guy, leave Ugly here to me."

Toothless looks at him in concern, then after Hiccup nods reassuringly Toothless turns and roars at the giant. When the Bewilderbeast responds with its own roar, Toothless takes off into the air and draws it away from the island before engaging it in battle. Then, as Hiccup gently lowers Astrid to the ground, Drago chuckles as he gets into a battle stance and says, "You don't know just how much I'm gonna enjoy this. Your Night Fury won't have a flock of dragons to command to help him this time. And even if he does survive his battle, you are the weak link in his partnership. Without you he'll never make it back to Berk, which means that all your dragons will become mine once again."

"And what makes you think that you can handle me?" Hiccup says across his flaming blade.

Drago laughs before saying, "Your suit may let you glide like a dragon, but it doesn't let you take off like one. Without altitude, you're just a scrawny bug to be crushed under my boot. But enough wordsâ€¦"

Drago then swung his weapon at Hiccup, who deflected the blow with his shield and countered with a slashing strike with his sword. As the deadly dance continued, Hiccup ducking under what blows he couldn't easily block with the shield as he knew the sword wouldn't absorb the force as well, Hiccup thought to himself, _Okay, Drago may be bigger than you, but that means that you're fast and he's slow. He's clumsy and you're agile. He's bulky and you'reâ€¦_ Then Drago feigns a blow to Hiccup's shield arm, and when Hiccup goes to block it, Drago instead swings the haft of the weapon to knock Hiccup's sword out of his hands. _â€¦about to be pounded into a pulp,_ Hiccup finished his thought. Drago then grabbed both of Hiccup's arms and dealt him a savage headbutt that left him stunned and reeling, then he followed it up with a series of hammer blows with his fists that caused Hiccup to collapse to the ground, wheezing and groaning in pain.

"What a complete waste of time. You aren't even worth the time I spent to prepare to assault Berk," Drago said disdainfully as he casually picked up his hook-spear from where he'd dropped it. Then, as he pulled Astrid's inert form into an upright position, he added,

"I know the paralysis will be wearing off any moment now, but I don't feel like waiting, and I want her to know that her would-be husband was utterly unable to save her life."

"You saidâ€|" Hiccup groaned as he reached for his sword and painfully pulled himself into a stooped but standing position, "â€|that if I took your challengeâ€|.that you wouldn'tâ€|"

"â€|that I wouldn't personally harm your girl. Yes, I remember, and I'll keep my word," Drago finished for him with a sneer, "But I never said anything about having my dragon do it for me. Nothing personal, but I can't leave anyone here who might be able to take your dragon to Berk and ruin my plans." Drago then turned to the Bewilderbeast, who was still engaging in battle with Toothless, and pointed his weapon at Hiccup and Astrid while bellowing at the dragon, "Finish them!"

As the Bewilderbeast abandoned his fight with Toothless to open his mouth to unleash its frigid blast, Hiccup saw his friend realize the danger and rushed back to help. However, despite how fast the Night Fury was, Hiccup knew that his friend would not arrive in time. Taking a defensive position in front of Astrid, Hiccup held his shield in front of him. He knew it wouldn't be enough to protect him, but he hoped it would be enough to help him protect her.

As the rush of white neared him and Hiccup braced himself for death, a second ice blast struck the ground a few feet in front of him, and the Bewilderbeast's frost breath was deflected by an ice stalactite as big around as his father and twice as tall. The disrupted ice blast solidified into a series of ice spikes that formed a V-shape around Stormfly, Astrid and himself.

"What!?" Drago barked in confusion and rage as he glared up in the direction the second blast had come from. As he felt Astrid soften beside him, Hiccup also looked for the distinctive shape of another Bewilderbeast, for he reasoned only that could have created the ice pillar that saved their lives. Astrid, however, gripped Hiccup's chin and made him look at the top of the rock ridge behind them, where she was currently staring in shock and silence. There he saw not the majestic gaze of the Bewilderbeast he's expected to be peeking out from behind it, but rather four much smaller figures standing atop of it: one man, two women, and a reindeer. As the woman in front, whom Hiccup noted was dressed in a powder blue dress and had her platinum hair tied in a ponytail, lowered her hand and the snow flurries died down, he saw her glare down at Drago and heard her say, "I really despise bullies."

2. Chapter 2: Arrival

Arrival

As the flames dissipated Elsa saw that she and the others were no longer in the cave-like shrine but rather on a large outcropping of rock on an island, and there was no sign of Aang and his friends here, so thankfully they had not picked up any other travelers on their tour of the ages. Also, Elsa saw no sign of Brooklyn here either, so it seemed that Aion, the Spirit of Eternity who'd bonded with him when Brooklyn unwittingly freed him from the Phoenix Gate, had been correct when he'd concluded that they would likely not

accompany them to this destination. Elsa wondered how long it would take for Brooklyn to master the use of Aion's powers enough for him to be able to return to his home. Elsa hoped that it wouldn't be too long for she knew what it was like to be separated from her home and family, and she was missing them so badly now. Of course Anna was currently with her, as was Kristoff, but considering what had happened at their last stop that made her even more desperate to get this journey over and done with.

At least this place smelled much more like home, with the mixture of aromas from the salty sea and the peat moss, and none of the unfamiliar chemical smells that accompanied their time in New York, so even if this wasn't the correct time they were still closer to where they were supposed to be. Elsa heard Anna take a deep whiff behind her, apparently also welcoming this connection to their home as a sign that they were close to returning to it, before she made a small wince in pain. Elsa whirled to face her, examining her closely as she asked, "Are you okay?"

Anna smiled and said, "I'm fine, Elsa. Really, Katara did a pretty good job in healing me. Just a little leftover soreness, that's all. But jeez, that Azula was a real jerk, wasn't she? Makes you wonder what kind of upbringing she had to turn out like that."

Elsa did wonder at that. Part of her had wanted to take up Sokka's offer to remain and fight to win that war alongside them, if only to have another shot at making Azula pay for what she'd nearly done to Anna, what she'd tried to do. However, she'd meant what she'd said about that not being her own time, but also she didn't want Azula or her father the Firelord to have another crack at Anna, and she could not bear the thought of remaining behind while her sister was sent ahead on this journey, wondering if she'd ever made it back home.

"Well try to take it easy anyway, okay? " Kristoff asked her asked her imploringly, "Not everyone gets to cheat death more than once, and you've done it now twice in less than a year. Let's not push our luck any further than we have to, okay? "

"Aww, but dying's so much fun," Anna teased him. When Kristoff didn't crack a smile, and even Elsa looked at Anna in concern, she held her hands up and said, "Sheesh, I was just kidding. I promise I'll be careful. "

"Thank you," Kristoff said gratefully, and Elsa felt herself breathe a sigh of relief. She would have a hard enough time keeping Anna safe with all of the Azula's and Quarrymen in the world trying to get a piece of them without Anna herself seeking out trouble.

Elsa heard the sound of a high pitched shriek behind her, which has punctuated by Anna's gasp of surprise and Kristoff's eyes widening in shock. _What now?_ Elsa thought to herself as she turned around to see what had made that sound and struck Anna and Kristoff speechless. What she saw struck her dumb as well.

Since this journey of theirs began, even before it started, back when an impossible wish to see her parents again came true, Elsa had seen a great number of strange and unusual things: from fairies to living gargoyles to giant, flying bison. This thing she saw landing on the beach below them was a creature of legend! It was an actual dragon!

Elsa had heard tales of how their ancestors, the Norse Vikings, had fought such beasts in ages past, and though it wasn't quite as large as those tales made them out to be (though not quite as small as Mushu, the only other dragon Elsa had ever personally seen), this creature matched the description of those tales exactly! This thing was jet black from snout to tail, save for the left side of the fin of said tail, which seemed to have been replaced by a red sail the same shape as the right.

Most notable about the appearance of this creature was the fact that someone appeared to have been riding him, the very person who now was stroking the dragon's head in apparent affection, and though they were too high up to hear him clearly, it seemed from his soft tone of voice that this rider thought of the dragon as a friend. Elsa saw as he removed his helmet, revealing that he was moderately handsome, then watched as he removed something from a pocket on his breeches leg then began pacing back and forth nervously as he started muttering to himself.

"What is he doing?" Elsa wondered aloud in a soft tone, wary of the young man below possibly hearing them. She hated spying on someone like this, but she couldn't risk heading down there to ask him herself. If there's one lesson she and her sister had learned the hard way, it's that a handsome face doesn't necessarily equal a good person. With her sister here she didn't want to take the chance with this one, particularly if his "dragon" turned out to be the real, fire-breathing kind.

"Looks like he's practicing some sort of speech," Kristoff observed, keeping his voice low like Elsa's.

"What is that he's fiddling with?" Anna asked softly.

Before either Kristoff or Elsa could come up with a guess, Elsa took a deep breath and pulled the other two closer to the rock as she spotted the arrival of another dragon-like creature to the island. This one wasn't as swift or as noisy in its approach, and its appearance was different as well: whereas the first one was black and walked on four legs, this one walked on two and was blue and yellow with a white underbelly, as well as having a spiked frill around the base of its head.

This dragon-like creature also had a rider: a blond female whose outfit was notably lined with fur. While the young man's leather armor was rather non-descript as far as nationality goes, the young woman's attire was most definitely Viking, which confused Elsa even more. She'd heard plenty of stories of the Vikings fighting dragons, but never of any of them RIDING them.

Apparently the young man was too deep in his thoughts to notice the arrival of the other rider, for he wound up jumping so badly that he fumbled the object he'd been fiddling with, a small object that glittered gold as it twirled in the air, before he caught it and stowed it back in his pocket before turning to greet his visitor.

"Wait, was that anâ€|?" Kristoff wondered quietly, trailing off before he finished his thought. Of course Elsa didn't really need him to: she pretty much guessed the same thing. If she was correct in her hunch, then the young man's nervousness as he practiced his lines, a

nervousness that only seemed to get worse with the arrival of this young woman, made perfect sense.

Still, assuming that she was correct in that these two were Vikings, Elsa felt rather bad for the young man. From what she knew of Viking culture, the women generally preferred to choose to marry (who were able to choose) men who were big and strong: the bigger and stronger, the better. The only young man Elsa had seen scrawnier than this kid was Aang (though Sokka came close). Judging by how nervous this kid was during his practice, Elsa figured he'd be devastated when his proposal was turned down.

Elsa decided that this guy shouldn't have anyone witness his humiliating rejection, and was just about to suggest to the others that they should turn away as he got down on one knee, when the sound of a pair of menacing growls caused the hairs on Elsa's neck to stand straight up. Looking back down, she saw the two dragons were growling in their direction. Elsa didn't know if they had been too noisy in their observations, or if the wind had shifted and carried their scents to the dragons' sensitive noses, but they certainly seemed to know they were there now.

As she made Anna and Kristoff hug the rock beneath them (Sven lying down beside them of his own accord), Elsa was torn between her fight and flight instincts: on one hand, she didn't want to start a fight with these people, who thus far had done nothing to warrant an act of hostility from her. On, the other hand, Elsa figured that if they decided that discretion was the better course of action, then these dragons would likely give chase, and as she'd seen just how fast they were the likelihood that Elsa and her friends would get away was practically nonexistent.

Just as Elsa had decided on a third option, to reveal her presence alone and apologize for eavesdropping, using the opportunity to decide for herself if these people were friend or foe, Elsa noticed that the dragons weren't growling at them after all. While the dragons were indeed facing the stone monolith Elsa and her friends were on, Elsa saw that they were not looking up at them but rather growling at something at its base.

Craning her head for a better view, Elsa saw a menacing figure of a man make his way around their rocky outcropping and into the sight of the two riders who drew their weapons: the young woman hefting a Viking battle axe, while the young man wielded a flaming sword in one hand and a rounded shield on the other arm. From the way he was holding it, Elsa could not see much of the shield's front beyond a small portion of the edge, but even though there seemed to be nothing about the sword or shield's design that appeared Viking-made to Elsa, she still felt that she'd seen that shield somewhere beforeâ€¦

Just as Elsa felt that the situation couldn't get anymore tense, a huge leviathan rose from the sea behind the larger man, and while the two dragons from earlier were smaller than the tales related, this thing was much too BIG! The size of a small mountain, this thing was an off-white color that was almost grey, had more spines than Elsa could count coming off its face and back, and had an iron manacle attached to its one intact tusk (the other one apparently broken off somehow).

With how huge this thing was, Elsa didn't understand why it didn't

spot her and her friends up here, but then figured that its attention was drawn to those on the beach. In fact, the huge white dragon and the much smaller black one seemed to only have baleful eyes for each other, just as the aggressive stances and tones of voices exchanged between the two riders and this large newcomer made it clear to Elsa that there was no love lost between them either.

As the young woman twirled her axe in her grip, the mountain of a man swung his hooked spear over his head as he bellowed wordlessly. At first Elsa thought that he was using some sort of battle cry, but then Elsa noticed a brightly glowing blue streak speeding towards the island. At first Elsa thought it was some sort of long-range attack, but then the streak stopped abruptly in front of the young woman and her dragon as the lady clearly shouted, "Flightmare!" and Elsa could see that the glow was from yet another dragon around the size of the black one. Then this newest dragon exhaled its misty breath on the young lady and her dragon, speeding away again just as the black dragon fired its pulse-like blast at it. When the mist cleared, Elsa saw that neither the girl nor her dragon were moving an inch.

Why that slimy, no-good, cowardlyâ€¦! Elsa thought furiously as she started to push herself up from the rock before Kristoff pulled her back down again. When she turned her glare on him, Kristoff returned it to her as he hissed, "No offence, your Highness, but what do you think you're doing?"

"I'm going to teach that man a lesson!" Elsa hissed back at him.

"And how do you think that will help them?" Kristoff retorted, then after glancing down at the ground again he pointed and whispered, "There, look!"

Elsa did and saw as the young man walked over to his dragon and did something to the saddle that apparently locked the tail-sail thing in place before the ebony dragon took off to confront the ivory monster. Then she watched as the young man carefully laid the young lady down, her arms and legs remaining in the exact same positions as they were when she was standing. _So, not dead, then,_ Elsa thought with relief, _just frozen, or paralyzed._ "Yeah, I see," Elsa whispered impatiently, every fiber in her being itching to help, "So?"

"So do you think that getting involved would help anything? Would help them?" Kristoff reasoned with her, "That big oaf most likely had that glowy dragon use his breath to paralyze the girl and her dragon in order to force the kid into a one-on-one fight because he believed he stood no chance if they fought together. Probably is holding the girl's life ransom as well to ensure that they don't work together. If we butt in, then he'll likely turn his blade on the girl. I know that you're powerful enough to take the big jerk without much effort, but can you handle him AND his big monster together? Could you ensure that neither of them harm the girl until the paralysis wears off, if it does?"

Elsa didn't have an answer for that. Though she knew he wasn't lying per-se, Elsa heard the false note in Kristoff's voice, and after watching the giant dragon amazingly breathe ice rather than the fire she'd been expecting, her mind connected the dots and surmised what it was Kristoff wasn't saying aloud in the presence of her sister. _He's concerned about Anna's safety,_ Elsa thought to herself,

_thinking about what had happened to us when I chose to get involved with the Quarrymen's business back in New York, and how close we all came to losing her at our last stop. _Elsa badly wanted to help these kids, but she too was concerned about keeping Anna safe until they made it back home, and she could not deny that it may be rather difficult to shield the kids from the man and his dragon should they decide to team up. So even though it felt as though her veins were crackling with the power she was holding back, Elsa settled back onto the rock as she watched the two battles unfold.

For such a scrawny young man who had no apparent powers, the kid was admittedly not a bad fighter. However, once the giant of a man managed to knock the sword from the boy's grip the battle took a turn for the worse, the man punishing him with savage blows from his head and fists. Then the man picked back up his own weapon and set the girl upright again as he began a monologue Elsa couldn't quite hear while the boy was crumpled in pain on the ground. After the boy said something in response as he slowly got back on his feet, the man said one last thing to the boy before he turned to the dragon, pointing his weapon at the kids as he bellowed, "Finish them!"

Elsa could not hold herself back anymore. Lurching to her feet (Anna, Kristoff and Sven a half step in following her up), Elsa fired a powerful ice blast at the ground as the boy desperately tried to protect the girl from the ivory giant's avalanche-like breath. For a moment, All Elsa could see of the ground below was the flow of the dragon's breath over it, the cruel man just out of its range. Then, as the dragon ceased its assault, Elsa saw that her blast had struck in time, creating a large ice stalactite that parted the ice breath and prevented it from enveloping the kids and their allied dragon as the paralysis wore off on it and the girl.

After the man exclaimed in surprise and anger, and the girl directed the boy's gaze so that he was looking directly at them, Elsa drew herself to her full height as she glared down at the man. "I'm sorry guys," Elsa apologized softly to Anna and Kristoff, then she raised her voice to a normal tone as she continued, "but I really despise bullies."

"It's okay," Anna assured her before Kristoff could say anything, "I would have asked you to help them anyway if you hadn't beaten me to the punch."

Elsa wasn't sure what Kristoff had been about to say, but it apparently was lost on his tongue as his mouth hung open for a moment. Then he closed it and had a look of resignation in his eyes as he smiled ruefully and said, "Yeah, it's cool. Cat's out of the bag anyway, so we might as well go along with it."

Elsa nodded, then she created an ice slide with a safety rail that wound its way around the rocky monolith they were on, forming her ice glider in her hand as she said, "You guys do what you can for those kids, I'll handle the ice dragon." As Anna and Kristoff nodded in acknowledgement, Elsa gripped her glider and ran towards the cliff-like edge, firing one last blast at the ground directly below her before she soared towards the giant beast.

* * *

><p>Hiccup wasn't entirely sure what he was looking at. Part of him

though that he might have simply been seeing things (Drago certainly had clocked him hard enough for it to be possible.) The only problem with that theory was that Astrid seemed to be seeing the same things as him. The question that remained then was what was he looking at?<p>

It seemed impossible to him that any human could wield power on par with a Bewilderbeast, much less use it with the skill and precision this woman displayed. His first thought was that she might be one of the frost giants, though he just as quickly dismissed that thought. For one, while she was certainly taller than the other girl with her (and, from what he could tell, taller than most of the women he himself had met in his life) she didn't seem taller than the male companion with her on the rocky monolith, let alone tall enough to be a jotun. Another thing that detracted from the possibility of her being a jotun was that she had clearly helped them. All the tales of the frost giants depicted them as beings who were intent on conquest of these lands, who viewed humans as either slaves or minor obstacles to be squashed, and neither Hiccup nor his father would have been born if Odin and the other gods of Asgard hadn't fought to defend this realm of Midgard. If this woman was in fact one of the Jotnar then she was decidedly different than any of her ilk depicted in the old tales.

Jotun or not, Hiccup could not deny that there was something different about this woman, for as he watched an ice slanted platform of sorts, almost like the things hiccup had created to move water onto the fires inadvertently set by the resident dragons, was created and wound around the rocky protrusion, the woman leapt off it with some sort of winged ice stick in hand, releasing what appeared to be another ice blast from her other hand at the ground before she gripped the stick thing with both hands and started flying. Apparently, this winged stick functioned similarly to his glider suit, but there was a world of difference between the simple gliding he'd been able to manage and the graceful flight of this woman.

"Get her!" Drago bellowed as he jabbed his hook-spear in the direction of the flying woman in the blue dress. The Bewilderbeast, responding to his master's command, raised its head and unleashed an ice blast in the woman's direction. Hiccup was surprised at this young woman's reaction as he personally had experienced the terrifying power of the Bewilderbeast firsthand, and even his mother, who had lived alongside a different Bewilderbeast for years and had even greater knowledge of dragons than he did, even she had been forced to retreat when Drago ordered his great dragon to attack her.

It seemed that Toothless was experiencing the same shock as he was hovering in place and watching as the young woman continued her aggressive approach, looping tightly around the Alpha's arctic breath as though she had nothing to fear from it before she released her glider and landed agilely on his intact tusk. Then she raced along it at incredible speed, sometimes running at such an angle that Hiccup at first wasn't sure how she managed to avoid falling off into the ocean below, that is until he noticed that she was creating a handrail of ice before her that she held onto, the same creation that dissolved into snow and mist behind her, and though it was difficult to tell from this distance it appeared to him that her feet also left a trail of ice behind her.

When the Alpha realized its target was on it, it shook its head to try to throw her off. However, the woman used the momentum of the movement to launch herself high into the air, unleashing a pair of ice blasts from her hands into the Bewilderbeast's face, then she gripped her ice glider as it swooped within her range again and flew around the giant dragon's left side as it roared in pain.

The roar snapped Toothless out of his inaction and he quickly joined the woman in her dangerous orbit, the pair of them diving and climbing as they dodged the Bewilderbeast's furious blasts as it turned in place trying to hit them. Just as Hiccup came to the conclusion that he and Astrid should climb onto Stormfly to help them out, he felt a tremendous tremor under his feet, followed shortly by another. He and Astrid turned towards the sound and their mouths fell open. Now _that_ was a Jotun! Granted that he had never seen one before, nor had any Viking in the last century as far as he knew, but there was nothing else that it could be! A gigantic humanoid creature of ice and snow, it nearly blocked the stone monolith behind it from view as it plodded its way towards the Bewilderbeast, but the dragon seemed too intent on its pursuit of the woman and his Night Fury to notice its approach.

With that observation, all the pieces fell into place. Now Hiccup understood why the woman was so aggressive in her approach and is now taking a more defensive maneuver: she was getting the dragon's attention! While this Jotun, who seemed to appear out of nowhere, certainly seemed to be powerful, it was also definitely rather slow, and while it was about as tall as the Bewilderbeast when it stood on all fours, the Alpha had much more heft to it. If the Jotun tried to take the Alpha head on it would have been blasted by ice breath before it even got close, that is if the Bewilderbeast didn't just gore it with its single tusk or rear up and smash it underfoot instead. By distracting it beforehand, the woman gave the Jotun the opportunity to get close, where its power could do some good. Then Hiccup recalled the ice blast the woman unleashed before engaging the Bewilderbeast. She must have done that to summon the Jotun here. Could it be that she's their Queen? Is it only the warriors of the Jotnar that were giants of ice?

"No, NO, _NO!_" Drago exclaimed in disbelief and fury, apparently coming to the realization that his well planned ambush was falling apart. Rather than going to the aid of his dragon, however, Drago glared at Hiccup in hate and fury as he swung his hook-spear at him. Hiccup was ready for the blow, however, and he blocked it with his shield as Astrid rolled towards his sword and threw it back towards him. Then Hiccup reignited his blade as Astrid hefted her axe, and the battle was rejoined anew.

* * *

><p>As Elsa and the black dragon circled around the huge white one and dodged the attacks it unleashed, she saw that her tactic was working. She knew that the one attack she'd unleashed on it would not cause it any lasting harm, but the pain it caused had enraged it enough that its entire focus was on her. It was so intent on bringing her down that it was ignoring the approach of the largest Marshmallow she'd created yet. Of course she hadn't counted on the black dragon joining her in this plan, but she found its involvement an unexpected blessing. The potshots it used on its larger earthbound brethren kept it enraged enough to continue trying to attack them, allowing

Marshmallow to get closer and closer unopposed.<p>

Of course she saw as the larger man once again attacked the smaller one, but Elsa would have to deal with this larger problem before she could help him. Besides, the one boy's girlfriend was no longer paralyzed, and from what Elsa could see her combat skills were not to be dismissed, not to mention Anna and Kristoff were now about halfway down the ice slide and would be able to provide further aid (though Elsa hoped to send this big dragon packing before it came to that).

Elsa completed her circuit just as Marshmallow came within arm's reach of the great beast. Elsa then swooped over Marshmallow's incoming right hook while the black dragon swooped under it, the pair of them managing to make it past his elbow just as his blow landed on the side of the circling beast's head. Elsa had never before encountered living creatures of such tremendous size, let alone imagined that she'd be so close to a pair of them battling, but the force of Marshmallow's blow was so great that it nearly disrupted Elsa's control over the winds that was keeping her aloft. Since she figured that the distraction phase of her plan was over now anyways, and she was not looking forward to a swim right now, Elsa released her glider once again and released a double ice blast into the ocean below, causing an ice pillar with a wide, flat top surface to rise up and catch her before she could fall too far. Then as Marshmallow continued raining hammer blows on the giant dragon, Elsa aided him by hitting it with one ice blast after another on the exposed part she could see. Apparently the black dragon took this change of tactics as an unspoken invitation, as it landed beside her and joined in by pummeling the great beast with its own powerful blasts. It wasn't long before the giant dragon decided it had enough and it turned to retreat beneath the waves.

With the larger threat gone, Elsa then turned her attention towards aiding the young couple against the big brute who'd started this whole thing. Since her ice glider had fallen into the ocean while she was busy driving off the huge dragon, Elsa prepared herself to create another, but she was distracted by a questioning groan from the dragon beside her. Looking over, she saw it look at her, then down at the island below them, then back at her, lowering its head as it did so.

"You want me to ride you?" Elsa asked the black dragon. In response it looked back at the island and lowered its head, keeping still as it did so. Elsa swallowed past the lump in her throat, feeling more nervous about this than she had been about confronting a beast large enough to swallow her whole. The last time she'd ridden aboard a live animal was just after her sister's accident, when she rode on a horse in front of her father as they raced alongside her mom and sister to the Valley of Living Stones to save her sister's life. Since then she'd stayed almost entirely indoors, and even after her isolation ended she mostly relied on self-transportation and the occasional ride in Kristoff's sleigh (the ride aboard the Jolly Roger was not one of her choosing). Still, time was of the essence, and this creature seemed friendly enough, so she steeled herself and gingerly set herself astride the dragon's back, altering her outfit to one that was more appropriate for this style of riding as she did so, then she gripped the handle grips before her as the dragon gave a mighty flap and soared back towards the island below.

* * *

><p>As they landed on the island, Elsa dismounted and the black dragon took an aggressive stance as it growled at the larger man even as Anna, Kristoff and Sven raced to her position. Also it appeared as though the blue dragon had been wanting to help her master out but had been afraid that she might hurt her in the process. However, now that the man was backing away from the growing number of opponents, the blue dragon's formerly smooth tail was bristling with spikes and she had it raised threateningly, apparently waiting for him to make one wrong move.<p>

"Give it up," Elsa told him in a commanding voice, "Your great beast has fled and you're outnumbered. It's over."

For a moment the big man glared at her with more hate than she'd ever seen in anyone's eyes. Then he glanced past her for a second and met her gaze as one corner of his mouth pulled up in a smile as he confidently asked, "Is it now?"

The way he smiled and asked that did not set well with Elsa, so she turned and saw the bright glare of the paralyzing dragon racing back towards them. Elsa raised her hands and reached inside herself for the power to erect an ice wall to block the dragon's breath attack, but before she could create it the dragon quickly slowed to a stop, hovering in place as its head cocked to one side in apparent confusion. Elsa was likewise confused as to why this dragon would suddenly stop in its attack, then she looked at her hands and noticed the cold gathered around them was causing the damp air around them to turn to mist much like the dragon's breath, and the light filtering through the mist reflected off her outfit and made it appear as though it was glowing much like the dragon hovering before her.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw the large man's face fall again in disbelief for a moment, then he snarled and bellowed as he swung his weapon overhead a couple of times before jamming the point into the ground. Like a well trained dog, the glowing dragon flew over to him and landed by his side for him to climb on its back. Then he let his baleful gaze pass over the group gathering before him, his eyes boring holes in Elsa's for a moment before he fixed his gaze on the young man who Elsa had come to the aid of and said, "Bear this in mind, boy! Twice now we have met in battle, and both times you have needed help in defeating me. It takes strength to rule, and that is something in which you are sorely lacking. When next we meet it'll be at Berk with my entire force behind me, and at that time I will destroy everything and everyone you love! Count on it, boy!"

Though she kept her gaze fixed on the brute, Elsa could have sworn that his dragon was staring at her with some sort of longing. Regardless, at the man's command the dragon lifted up from the ground and took off, quickly vanishing from sight. Elsa thought the young man had looked troubled by what their attacker had said, but once it was clear that they were gone and not coming back he took a deep breath and turned to Elsa and said, "Thank you. If you folks hadn't come along when you hadâ€|"

"It was nothing, really," Elsa told them, "We couldn't exactly see something like that happening and stand by doing nothing."

The young man smiled and nodded as he said, "My name is Hiccup,

Chieftain of Berk, and you've already become acquainted with Toothless, my Night Fury, and this is Astrid and her Deadly Nadder, Stormfly."

Elsa was somewhat mystified at this revelation, considering that she thought these people were Vikings. From what she knew of her ancestors, the Vikings highly valued strength, and those in charge were usually the strongest of the lot. This kid was as far removed from that image that she could get. Then again, she had never heard of Vikings riding or commanding dragons. Regardless, Elsa returned his smile and said, "Nice to meet you. I am Elsa, Queen of Arendelle, this is my sister Anna, her boyfriend Kristoff, and this big guy is Sven."

Hiccup and Astrid looked at each other before Hiccup asked her, "Arendelle? Is that a province in Jotunhelm?"

Elsa didn't understand this reference, so she asked politely, "I'm sorry?"

"Jotunhelm? Realm of the Jotnar?" Hiccup clarified. When Elsa and her friends still looked clueless, Hiccup clarified further, "The frost giants?"

Those Elsa had heard of, and Elsa groaned internally that she would be associated with them by someone who may be her own ancestor. "No, we're not from Jotunhelm," Elsa assured them.

Hiccup nodded like he agreed, saying in a thoughtful tone, "I thought that your mannerisms were odd to be one of those Thor and his fellow Asgardians defended our realm from."

"Perhaps that's it," Astrid suggested, "Maybe they're from Asgard, like your shield."

At that mention, Elsa got a good look at Hiccup's shield for the first time and her breath caught. She had seen that shield before, in the memories Julian had shown her from his time in New York! It was wielded by the soldier who fought alongside the powerful green giant and the man in the flying armored suit! This only served to confuse Elsa further, as that was an event from the future and they were supposed to be in the distant past. How did that get back here? _ "No, I'm not from Asgard either," Elsa told them, "Nor do I think that shield is either. It's hard to explain, but it's enough to say that we're currently a long way from home. We were trying to make our way back when we came across you guys."

"You know something about my shield?" Hiccup asked her, his interest peaked, "My father, Stoick the Vast, former Chief of Berk, had found it on a battlefield and it survived one of Toothless' plasma blasts point blank! What can you tell me?"

"Sorry to interrupt, but I don't think that this is the best place to have this conversation," Kristoff told them earnestly, "especially if that creep manages to locate his huge beast and come back this way."

"I agree," Astrid said, "plus we really need to get back to Berk and warn everyone of Drago's attack."

Hiccup nodded, then he looked around at everyone and their own dragons as he said thoughtfully, "There isn't really any way that our dragons could carry all of you, so we'd have to get someone back home to bring a ship back home for all of you. Of course I suppose you could get your Jotun to carry all of you instead, but he's kind of slow to be following us, and as big as he is the ocean gets to be rather deep between here and Berkâ€|"

"No, I agree. There's no way that Marshmallow could carry us to where you're going," Elsa said with a small smile, reflecting on a similar problem they'd encountered at their previous stop and how they'd worked it out, "but If you can lead the way, I have another ideaâ€|"

* * *

><p>The two dragons and their riders flew low over the ocean, and closely behind them Sven ran over a rapidly forming ice bridge pulling an ice sleigh with Elsa, Anna, and Kristoff riding inside. As they neared a craggy island, Elsa saw colorful buildings arranged on the side facing them.<p>

"Is thatâ€|?" Elsa said as she pointed ahead of them with the hand that wasn't creating the bridge.

"Yes," Hiccup confirmed as they drew nearer to the stone sentries guarding the harbor, "That is Berk, our home."

3. Chapter 3: Turmoil

****Turmoil****

Valka smiled endearingly at her husband who had resumed his pacing. Of course she had borne witness to him losing his composure before, earlier in the house being a prime example. However, Stoick coming unglued here, at the edge of the village in full view of everyone, was quite unlike him. Of course if Stoick had been as stoic in private as he normally appeared in public Valka probably wouldn't have married him in the first place, even if that was what their parents wanted.

"Just relax, love," Valka gently told him, "So Hiccup is a little late in getting back, that doesn't mean anything's wrong."

"You don't understand, Valka. It's not like Hiccup to be late like this," Stoic told her, then he amended himself and said, "Actually it's totally like him, but not when he has Astrid with him. She's one of the most responsible people in the village, and Hiccup has never been late for a village meeting since he's become Chieftain." Stoic then turned towards the young riders and asked, "Are you sure that Astrid said that she was going to meet him?"

"Absolutely, Chief!" Snotlout said with certainty, then as he realized his mistake he uncertainly amended, "â€|I mean sirâ€|.uh, actuallyâ€|"

Ruffnut elbows him out of the way and says, "What Snotlout is trying to say is that he and I had arrived to the pens to check on our dragons this morning when we found Astrid there ahead of us, Stormfly

already saddled up. She said she was going to meet Hiccup, though she wouldn't say where, then she took off."

"Then where is he?" Stoic asked in agitated concern, "They should have been back by now!"

"Maybe they just wanted to take their time in getting back," Valka suggested, "They likely wanted to enjoy the bliss of the moment and forestall everyone bombarding them with questions on how it went. I'm sure that the whole village saw them becoming a couple for a long time now."

"You're right there, Ma'am," Fishlegs agreed, "I saw it clear back when we were still training to kill dragons, though I never said it aloud for fear that Astrid would kill me if I did."

"Look!" one villager cried out as she pointed, "There they are now!"

Valka strained her eyes in the direction the villager indicated as the others did the same, Fishlegs pulling out his spyglass for a better view. Valka was able to definitely make out the unique profile of her son and his dragon, as well as the one she identified as belonging to Astrid. Curiously, Valka saw that they were flying close to the water and neither was approaching very quickly, and Valka was well familiar with how quickly both could move (especially Toothless). Even more curiously was the patch of fog practically right below them, in which Valka though she saw something moving.

"They don't seem to be moving very fast," Valka commented, feeling a bit apprehensive herself now.

"Perhaps you were right after all, my love, and they were just taking their time to draw out their private moment before it became very public," Stoick assured her in return.

"I don't think so," Fishlegs countered, his voice heavy with concern, "Hiccup looks as though he's been hurt pretty badly."

"What!?" Stoick snapped as he snatched Fishlegs' looking glass away from him and placed it to his own eye, and it was all Valka could do to restrain herself from taking it from him for herself.

"What about Astrid?" Astrid's father asked Fishlegs in concern, "Was she hurt?"

"Not that I could see, sir," Fishlegs answered him, "But there's more: they aren't alone."

"By Odin's beard!" Stoick whispered in dumbfounded confusion, "What is that?"

Now Valka's agitation got the better of her, and she took the looking glass from Stoick so she could see. From the way he held himself on Toothless, it was immediately apparent that he was hurt, and since he wasn't wearing his helmet Valka could see the bruises that were appearing on his face, which looked too large to have been caused by Astrid. As much as she was concerned about her son, however, Valka was curious about the other things Fishlegs mentioned. After a quick

glance at Astrid (who, thankfully, did appear unharmed), Valka focused the glass on the fog below, then she took a deep breath at what she saw. The fog was actually being caused by pillars of ice forming in midair and plunging into the warm sea below. Even stranger was that the ice pillars were supporting a bridge made of ice, across which raced a sleigh of ice pulled by a single reindeer. While there seemed to be a man wearing a simple attire holding the reindeer's reins and a young woman riding in the back, it was the slightly older woman in the seat by the male driver who had Valka's attention, for it seemed that it was from her that the ice bridge seemed to be coming from. As they got closer, Valka could see that snow was pouring from her hand and forming into the bridge shape in front of her, hardening into ice before the reindeer's hooves touched down on it. What it meant Valka was unsure and was even more hesitant to say aloud, for even though the Jotun were the only ones she knew that had such power this woman did not appear to be one of them, and she doubted that Hiccup would lead one of their ancient enemies to them even under threat of force.

"What is it, Valka?" her old childhood friend Hilda asked, "What do you see?"

Valka could not find any way to avoid answering, so she told them. She avoided voicing the conclusions she'd drawn, but it apparently didn't matter as fearful whispers of "Jotun" and "frost giants" broke out around her.

"Are we being invaded?"

>"They've been gone for hundreds of years, why have they returned now?"
"Have we displeased Odin in some way? Is that why they've been allowed to return?"

>"Where is Thor when you need him?"
"Were they the ones who hurt Chief Hiccup?"

"Please, everyone!" Stoick called out, "I want the answers to these questions as much as you do. Now it looks as though they'll be arriving at the pier, so if you'll follow me we'll get our answers together. Nobody hurts my son and gets away with it!"

Stoick then turns and walks to the path leading to the pier, with the rest of the village following him murmuring in angry voices before Valka could come up with something to say to stop them.

* * *

><p>Anna felt the vibrations in the sleigh change slightly as it transitioned from the ice bridge onto the wooden pier. Then she heard the cracks and splashed as the bridge was finally allowed to break up and dissolve into the ocean, and the ice sleigh melted as it followed the bridge into oblivion. Anna, however, wished that she still had a seat to hide behind as she saw a bunch of Viking villagers heading their way, all of them looking rather angry.<p>

"Um, Chief Hiccup?" Anna said uneasily as she gripped her frying pan in her clammy hands, "I don't think that your friends are too happy to see us."

"Don't worry, Princess," Hiccup assured her as he dismounted his dragon, who had landed on a moored ship beside them, "I'll handle this."

Hiccup then hopped over onto the pier along with Astrid, placing themselves in the path of the advancing crowd as he said, "Everyone calm down. It's all right, these people!"

A man, who had to be the largest one of the group, kneeled down and gently placed both hands on Hiccup's shoulders as he asked in a concerned voice, "Are you okay, son? Did these people hurt you too badly?"

"No, Dad, I'll be okay," Hiccup assured him, "but these people!"

"That's good, son," Hiccup's dad interrupted as he stood again, removing a double-headed battle axe from his back as he nudged Hiccup out of the way and began advancing forward again, saying, "Now why don't you go rest up at the great hall for a bit. We'll take it from here."

"No. Wait, Dad, you don't understand!" Hiccup said as he unsuccessfully tried to restrain him, "These guys!"

"Look! That one has been twice-struck by Thor!" one other villager cried out, and Anna saw that he was pointing directly at her, "They're enemies of the gods! We have to stop them!"

Anna looked down and realized that she was still wearing the dress she had on when Azula blasted her with lightning. _Great!_ Anna thought to herself, mentally rolling her eyes, _**I'm**_ the reason these people are so worked up! Now I know just how Elsa felt after I pushed her to accidentally reveal her powers at the coronation party._

Before Anna could come up with anything to say or she could decide to make a break for it, although the only way clear was the ocean behind her, Elsa faced the crowd as she stepped directly between them and her. Anna felt the air around her drop several degrees and saw frost start to form on the pier beneath her as Elsa growled, "Listen, you bunch of ignorant barbarians! We've never met your gods and it certainly wasn't your precious Thor who hurt Anna! It was a power hungry princess who happened to be one stone block short of a castle! Anna's been through enough, and if any of you want to lay one finger on her you'll have to go through me."

Kristoff strode forward to stand beside Elsa, hefting his climbing pick in silent agreement. As the crowd started forward again, Anna was afraid they were going to take Elsa up on her challenge. However, Hiccup dashed out in front of them again, looking back and forth between the villagers and Elsa as he pleaded, "Stop! Everyone calm down, please! These people aren't our enemies, and they weren't the ones who hurt me. It was Drago."

"Drago?" Hiccup's father asked him, stopping at the mention of the name and looking Hiccup in the eyes as the angry mob stopped with him, "Drago Bludvist?"

"Yes, dad. He's back, and from what I've seen he's been rebuilding his dragon army," Hiccup confirmed, "He's already got himself a Flightmare, which he used to paralyze Astrid. He threatened to hurt her if I did not duel him one-on-one, without Toothless. I had no choice

but to agree. I'm sorry, Dad, but he was too big and strong for me. I know her powers may seem strange, but if it wasn't for Queen Elsa's intervention Astrid and I would have perished in the frigid breath of Drago's Bewilderbeast. Now he's preparing to attack Berk itself."

At that declaration, a slender, dark haired woman who looked about the same age as Elsa's mom finally fought her way to the front of the crowd, then she looked Elsa in the eye as she said, "Is that true, child! Did you really save my son?"

Elsa drew herself up regally, and Anna noticed that her voice had lost the angry edge it had as she replied, "Yes, milady. Everything your son said was true."

Hiccup's mom strode forward with the same grace as she said, "I know not what land or realm you strangers hail from, but you have my gratitude all the same." Then, so quickly that it took everyone by surprise, Hiccup's mom drew Elsa into an embrace as she whispered, "Thank you."

"Y-you're welcome," Elsa stammered, apparently caught off guard by this public display, then she pulled away as she added, "but as your son said, this is far from over."

Hiccup's mom still smiled gratefully even as she nodded her understanding. His dad echoed his wife's response as he said, "Of course, and I'm sorry about the misunderstanding and I thank you as well." After Elsa nodded her acknowledgement and acceptance, Hiccup's dad turned towards his son and asked, "Well, what should we do?"

"Me?" Hiccup asked in confusion.

"You are still the Chieftain of Berk, what's happened hasn't changed that," Hiccup's dad told him, "While I can advise you on a course of action, the decision to take that course or go another is entirely up to you."

Hiccup closed his eyes as he took a steadying breath, then he looked at his father and said, "We should begin by fortifying the island. It won't make much of a difference when Drago brings his Bewilderbeast into the fight, but it should buy us time against his men and other dragons."

Hiccup's dad nodded his understanding, then he turned his head towards the crowd behind him and hollered, "What are you waiting around for? You heard your chief, get to it!"

"We'll also need to get ready the saddles of those riders who'll be riding into battle, make sure they'll be good for the rough use to come," Hiccup added, "And since we know that Drago has a Flightmare at his beck and call, it would help if everyone who's fighting has a set of full body armor, reduce the chances they'll be affected by the Flightmare's paralyzing breath."

"Of course," Hiccup's dad acknowledged, then he turned towards a man with a peg leg who did not leave with the others and said, "Gobber?"

"On it, Stoick," the one-legged man acknowledged, then he hobbled a

bit forwards towards Kristoff, eyeing the pick he still held loosely in his hands as he asked, "You weren't really going to challenge us with that wee thing, were you lad?"

Kristoff glanced down at his pick briefly as he replied in confusion, "It's always served me well before."

Gobber guffawed once as he said, "Clearly you've never fought against Vikings before, we'd use something like that to pick our teeth. Why don't you stop by my shop in a bit, I'll let you pick out a better weapon to use." Then, without waiting for an answer, Gobber hobbled off.

Hiccup faced his father as he continued, "I'll need to go somewhere quiet while I think of what other preparations need to be made."

Stoick nodded his understanding and gestured towards the largest building (short of what appeared to be the dragons' aerie) in the center of town. Astrid, however, caught up to him, placing a gentle restraining hand on his shoulder as she said, "Hiccup, wait."

Hiccup turned to look at Astrid, and Anna thought she recognized the look in Hiccup's eyes. It appeared to be the same look she'd seen many times in the eyes of her sister. For the first few weeks after the events following the coronation it was all that she saw whenever Elsa looked at her, and she'd seen that same look in her eyes once again as Elsa had examined her wounds before Drago had shown up with his dragon.

Before she could figure out what it meant, Hiccup's expression cleared as he smiled a painful looking smile and said, "It's okay, Astrid. I need time to think, so why don't help our friends get prepared?" Then Hiccup turned back to continue on his way. As Hiccup climbed up the steps to the village proper, Anna heard Astrid talk in a voice so low she wasn't sure Hiccup had heard, but Anna clearly heard the anger and hurt in Astrid's voice as she said, "As you say, Chief." Then Astrid stormed off towards the stairs as well, altering her course at the top to head for the dragon aerie instead.

"Oh dear," Hiccup's mom murmured fretfully as she looked at Stoick.

Anna then saw Elsa and Kristoff share a significant glance with one another as Elsa said, "You go to talk to that girl
Astridâ€|"

"â€|while you discuss matters with young Chief Hiccup," Kristoff finished for her as he nodded his agreement.

As they both turned towards the stairs, Anna called out to them asking, "What should I do?"

As Elsa turned towards Anna she saw that same look in her eyes again, and she was starting to really hate, HATE that look, then Elsa said, "Why don't you take Sven somewhere he can get something to eat, Anna, then maybe you can help out Stoick and the others?"

When Elsa and Kristoff turned back and continued on their way, Anna felt her blood rising. Stoick gave her a sympathetic look as he said,

"Come, my dear, we could use your help giving Gobber a hand with the saddles."

"Anna, is it?" Hiccup's mom asked with a smile, holding out her hand, "My name is Valka. A pleasure to meet you. While we help out my husband you can tell us all about yourself." Then Valka took Anna's hand in her own and followed Stoick into the village.

* * *

><p>As Elsa entered the Great Hall, she saw Hiccup picking up a helmet from a table next to a large throne-like chair. From the large curved horns that stuck out from either side, Elsa guessed that it must be the Viking equivalent of a crown, and judging by the portraits arranged around the hall (including the one showing Hiccup standing beside his dad, who was wearing that very helmet) that appeared to be the case. However, it looked as though this helmet was too big and heavy for Hiccup to wear himself, and that seemed to be the case as he sighed and set it back down where it was.<p>

"Pretty heavy, isn't it?" Elsa commented, and she felt slightly guilty as Hiccup jumped in startlement. After his breathing settled, Hiccup chuckled slightly as he said, "Yeah, well it was made for my dad back when he was chieftain, and while I'm sure he'd intended for me to wear it when I came of age, I simply had never managed to develop the muscle mass to do so. While I suppose I could have requested one to be made that was more my size, I simply never felt the need to do so. I guess if I were to wear any headgear I'd prefer it to be more functional, like the one I use when riding Toothless."

"I think I can relate to that," Elsa told him, "I haven't worn my tiara since the day of my coronation, I'm not even sure where it is right now. However, I wasn't referring to just the helmet itself, but to the burden of responsibilities that comes with it. The need to keep the peace amongst your people, the necessity to shield them from outside threats, to feed and protect your friends and loved ones. Even without wearing a bulky crown or a heavy cape, it can still feel like the weight of the world is on your shoulders."

"Yes, it can," Hiccup sighed as he ran his finger around the outline of the helmet, then he turned towards Elsa as he asked, "You didn't just come here to compare the burdens of being a Queen with those of a Chieftain, did you?"

"No, I didn't," Elsa confirmed, "I actually came here to talk about Astrid."

* * *

><p>When Kristoff located Astrid in a building located just off the aerie, which was apparently designed for combat training, he found her furiously hacking at a straw dummy (which Kristoff noticed had a paper with a crudely drawn face of that Drago character affixed to the head) with a battle axe while four equally young Vikings watched. Two of them, one a stout yet buff young man and the other larger and rotund, were looking at Astrid as if they were afraid of her. The other two were a male and female, who were both equally tall and gangly (and due to their similar appearance were likely fraternal twins), were watching Astrid with fascination: the way one might

watch a lion rip apart a deer, knowing full well it might turn at any moment to rip into you.<p>

"You know, I think that Astrid is scarier now than she ever was during Dragon Training," the rotund young man commented fretfully, to which the stout man nodded mutely in agreement.

"Yeah, isn't it great!" the male twin agreed, "You know, I'm kinda glad now that you guys had fixated on Ruffnut instead of Astrid. Now if Astrid and Hiccup have called it quitsâ€|"

"Don't you guys have some preparations to get started on!?" Astrid barked as she fixed her glare on the four of them, causing them to mutter apologies as they headed off through a door on the opposite side of the room. Astrid then hefted her axe and took off the dummy's head with a single blow.

"Wow, I wouldn't want to be_ that_ guy," Kristoff commented softly. At the sound of his voice, Astrid bellows as she whirls and hurls her weapon his way, the axe imbedding itself in the wall mere inches away from his head. "Nice aim," Kristoff gulped as he stared at his reflection on the axe head with wide eyes.

"Oh, it's you!" Astrid said in surprise, then she strode over to retrieve her axe, her voice losing some but not all of the angry edge as she said apologetically, "Sorry about that, but as you can see this isn't a good time."

"No, it's all right. I can tell that you have a lot of frustration to work off, and that what happened on the island is at the root of it," Kristoff told her as he walked over to retrieve the dummy's head, "Actually, I was hoping that I could join you."

"I'm sorry, but I had just met you," Astrid said to him in irritated disbelief, "How can you possibly claim to know what I'm feeling?"

As Kristoff set the head back into place, he saw in his mind's eye the dummy morph into the three young women who attacked Anna, Elsa and himself, then he started pummel it with savage body blows as he told Astrid, "That's because just moments before I met you I _was_ you. I know how it feels to be rendered helpless to protect the one you care deeply for."

* * *

><p>"What about Astrid?" Hiccup asked Elsa.<p>

"Well, for starters, I know that you were about to propose to her before that creep Drago interrupted," Elsa told him.

"How did you know that?" Hiccup asked her in confusion, "I didn't even tell anyone here the reason for my outing."

"We arrived at that Island while you were waiting for Astrid," Elsa explained, "We weren't close enough to overhear most of what you were saying, but some gestures are apparently as old as time. Anyway, when that man Drago started attacking you I wanted to intervene then, but my sister's boyfriend Kristoff convinced me that he might have turned his weapon on Astrid if I did."

"Don't worry, it was good you didn't take that chance, and I'm glad you stepped in when you had," Hiccup assured her.

"Thanks for that," Elsa said, "But back to my original point, I saw that Astrid wanted to help you earlier at the pier, but instead you sent her off on an errand that I think anyone else here could have likely done as easily. I'm guessing that what Drago said to you on that island got to you, about you being unable to protect Astrid."

"What if he's right, though?" Hiccup asked her, "I wasn't strong enough to beat him, and I was unable to protect Astrid when it mattered most. Maybe I shouldn't have accepted Berk's chieftainship from my father, and maybe it'd be best if I let Astrid go, so she can be with someone who can protect her."

"I'm sorry, Hiccup, but that's wrong," Elsa told him. "The only mistake you made was letting Drago bait you into matching him in a contest of strength, as there was no chance you could win that way and he knew it. I'm certain your father named you his successor because of this," Elsa said as she tapped his head, then she gestured to the rest of him as she continued, "not because of this. Furthermore, I'm certain that Astrid is with you because she cares about you, not because she wants you to try and physically stop every bully that crosses their paths with the two of you."

"That's easy for you to say, you have those awesome ice powers. You went toe-to-toe with Drago's Bewilderbeast without breaking a sweat," Hiccup told her, "I'm just a boy who was lucky enough to find and befriend a Night Fury."

"Oh, believe me, I was sweating the whole time," Elsa countered, "and these powers aren't all they're cracked up to be. In fact, there was once a time I would have done anything just to be rid of them. Besides, possessing these abilities didn't empower me to prevent my sister Anna from dying before my eyes, not once but twice."

* * *

><p>"I have faced off against an invading army of soldiers, bloodthirsty pirates, and hate-filled creeps wielding weapons the likes of which you cannot imagine, and still I managed to hold my own," Kristoff told Astrid in a tone filled with regret, "but then I get taken out of the fight in less than a minute by a woman less than half my size, when she used her knives to pin me to the wall. Even Anna, who is even smaller than that and has no formal combat training, even she lasted longer than that. The worst part of that moment was the scream. The sound Anna made when that witch Azula shot her with lightning, I don't think I can forget it as long as I live, and I wasn't even able to free a single arm to pull her out of the way or to catch her as she fell dead practically at my feet."<p>

* * *

><p>"This sister who died, it's not the same one who's with you now, is it?" Hiccup asked Elsa. When she nodded yes, Hiccup looked at her in confusion and asked, "But how's that possible? How could she have died even once, much less twice, and still be with you now?"<p>

"Mostly luck, I suppose, or maybe there was some higher power at work. I really don't know," Elsa admitted, "The first time it was my own powers that killed her, when I'd accidentally frozen her heart. She could have saved herself by kissing Kristoff to thaw her heart before it was too late. Instead she chose to save me from being killed by her ex-fiancé Hans, throwing herself between me and his sword just before she froze completely solid. Fortunately that also counted as an 'act of true love', and her heart thawed as she came back to me again. As for the second time, you remember those scorch marks on my sister?"

"You mean the ones you said were caused by a crazy princess," Hiccup clarified.

Elsa nodded as she continued, "Princess Azula. She and I were dueling practically one-on-one, and despite the fact that she wielded both fire and lightning, and she probably had more time to learn control over her powers than I did mine, I still managed to fight her to a standstill. However, when she saw she was getting nowhere with me she turned her lightning on Anna. I tried to block her shot but wasn't fast enough, only managing to split the bolt and reduce the amount of lightning that stopped her heart. When I heard Azula laughing as I held my sister's lifeless body in my arms I just lost it, summoning up a blizzard and sending it into Azula's face. Fortunately the blizzard blinded that crazy princess as she tried to counterattack with her lightning, and one of her stray bolts hit Anna and restarted her heart."

"That's intense," Hiccup said, barely breathing, "but why are you telling me this?"

"I'm telling you to illustrate that I understand how you feel, the guilt at not being able to protect someone important to you, the fear that the same people would get hurt by just being around you," Elsa explained, "More than that, however, is that I'm trying to tell you that running away, distancing yourself from those you care about, that kind of 'solution' will only make things worse. When I first hurt Anna when we were kids, I isolated myself in my room. When an argument between us years later caused me to reveal my powers to the whole kingdom, I ran away. None of that worked, as Anna tracked me down anyway, determined to make things right between us. That led to my fear causing my powers to freeze Anna's heart. You see, it was my fear and lack of confidence in myself that essentially killed my sister that first time. However, it was my sister's love and determination, her confidence that there wasn't anything we couldn't face as long as we were together, that was what saved her life back then."

Hiccup nodded in understanding as he said, "You think I should still propose to Astrid."

Elsa nodded as she confirmed, "Not right away, as with the coming conflict it would be classically bad timing, but if you truly love her you should still go let her know that you haven't changed your mind, that your feelings are still the same. Once this crisis is over, that would be the ideal time to ask her. And you shouldn't doubt yourself against Drago. Just because you're not physically powerful enough to beat him in a knock down, drag out fight that doesn't mean you cannot win. Sometimes it's the smarter fighter that wins, not the strongest."

Hiccup took a deep breath, then he straightened and said, "You're right. I've been beating myself up for being trapped into a bad situation beyond my control. I had completely forgotten how I managed to beat Drago before, but your talk reminded me that I had. I now know what to do."

Elsa nodded as she said, "Then let's get to work."

* * *

><p>"So you think that he still wants toâ€|.you know?" Astrid asked Kristoff hopefully.<p>

"You kidding? It would take more than his getting battered by that scar-faced jerk with a hook to change the way he feels about you," Kristoff assured her, "Trust me when I say that he's just feeling incredibly guilty about not being able to protect you, not quite the man he feels he's supposed to be. Just give him time and let him know that your feelings haven't changed towards him either. Once he feels better after giving that Drago exactly what he deserves, I'm sure that he'll be popping the question again before you know it."

"In that case, what are we waiting for?" Astrid said as she smiled broadly, slinging her axe onto her back once more, "There's still quite a bit to do, let's get back to it."

* * *

><p>"I can't believe that she'd do this to me!" Anna fumed as Stoick, Valka and Gobber looked on sympathetically, "I mean I risked everything, made the ultimate sacrifice even, in order to save Elsa from that sleaze Hans! And when Elsa had been kidnapped by pirates I was the one who decided to follow the fairies to their island in order to help her! Not to mention I fought against armed soldiers, hood-wearing creeps, and even a lady who's extremely dangerous knives. I'd like to think that I'd proven myself capable of handling myself. Instead, she has Kristoff doing who-knows what while she has big, important talks with Chief Hiccup."<p>

"As for me, she has me here babysitting Svenâ€|.uh, no offenseâ€|" Anna continues with a glance at Sven, who looks up from munching the hay Gobber provided him to give Anna a good-natured snort before returning to his meal, "â€|while also helping you guys doâ€|.what exactly are we doing here?"

"We're inspecting the saddles that all the riders will be using in the coming battle, checking for excess wear, worn down straps, warped buckles, things like that," Stoick explained to Anna kindly.

"Exactly. You don't want to go into a messy situation like that with a saddle that might fail on you unexpectedly," Gobber added while changing one tool on his missing hand for another, "It's especially a problem for the faster dragons, like the Deadly Nadder and the Night Fury, as by the time they realize you and your saddle have fallen off they'd be too far away to be able to swing back and catch you before you hit the ground. Of course that's a double problem for Toothless, as his handicap makes it impossible for him to fly without a rider onboard. Unless Hiccup locks Toothless' replacement tailfin into

place, that is, but since that mechanism is built into his saddle that wouldn't matter: something goes wrong with his saddle, they both go down fast and hard."

"Okay, I get it. This is important too," Anna conceded, "Still, I know what Elsa was doing by this. She was giving me busy work so that I stay safe and out of danger, and I would probably be okay with that if it weren't for the fact I know Elsa will be in the thick of all this. I can't be just standing on the sidelines while my sister is out there risking her life. I mean, you guys understand, right? You're not simply going to be hiding in a basement or anything while Hiccup's facing off against Drago, are you?"

"Certainly not! Skullcrusher and I will be out giving Drago plenty of reasons to regret deciding to show his face around here!" Stoick said boisterously as he patted the front snout horn of a large green and red dragon. Valka then punched Stoick in the arm, and Stoick briefly met his wife's glare with an apologetic look as he focused on Anna and continued, "But if I could keep my son on the ground, leading our people from a place of safety, I probably would. The problem is that Hiccup is one of the best dragon riders we've got. There's nobody here who knows more about dragons or has a tighter bond with their own except perhaps my wife here, and though I was hard pressed to get him to admit it or to admit it myself, Hiccup truly is a natural born leader. To keep my son off the field of battle when he's earned his place on it would be a disservice to him, but that doesn't mean I won't stop trying to ensure he lives long enough to have children of his own."

"And you can't blame your sister for trying to keep you safe," Valka added, "It's only natural for an older sibling to want to try and protect the younger, and it's clear you two share a strong bond."

"Yes, we do," Anna agreed, "but that's all the more reason I need to be by her side. If it wasn't for the number of times I'd helped her, Elsa wouldn't even be here to be such a worrywart."

"I understand, child, and the things you told us you've done certainly makes you appear to be a capable warrior," Stoic told her, "but surely you can see your sister's side of things too. I mean, I saw the look of fear on your face when we came to the docks to confront you. Sorry again about scaring you, by the way."

"It's okay. I know that if the roles were reversed, if Elsa though you guys had hurt me she'd react the same way, and the same goes for me about her," Anna told them, feeling deflated, "I guess the main reason I'm so upset is that I regret that it seems necessary to her. I mean she's so smart and beautiful, and the things she can do with ice and snow are just amazing. As for Kristoff, put a horned helmet on him and place a battle-axe in his hands and he'd fit right in with you guys. But I'mâ€¦just me: no ice powers, no strength or combat training, and since the fairy dust wore off I can't even fly anymore." Anna unslung her frying pan, of which she was once so proud, and looked at it gloomily as she said, "All I've got is this."

"I wouldn't go underestimating a skillet, lass," Stoick tried to assure her, "I've been hit with one enough times to know better."

"Well I needed some way to get through that thick skull of yours, love," Valka chuckled.

"The worst part of all this is that you're right, I was scared," Anna admitted, "I've never really had that problem before, not when I was facing the prospect of climbing a mountain alone to go after my sister, not when a pack of wolves was chasing me and Kristoff, and even when Elsa sent Marshmallow to chase us off the mountain she'd ran off to, even then I'd leapt off a cliff without any real fear. Heck, even when the Quarrymen had me chained up over an anvil and threatened to bash my brains in the only fear I felt came after, when I was afraid of losing my sister to her need to exact vengeance against them. However, after Azula shot me with lightning, and please don't tell my sister this, but ever since then I've been terrified of dying again."

"You don't need to feel that way, lass," Valka assured her with a smile, "I'm sure that with everything you've accomplished here on Earth, the bravery you've shown where others would have faltered, that Odin would be waiting for you in Valhalla to welcome you at the Table of Kings."

"But that's just it, I never saw anything!" Anna insisted, "I know what you guys believe about the afterlife, and I know what my parents brought me up to believe, and I never saw any of it: no pearly gates or great fields of battle, no Valkyries or angels to greet me, nothing! I passed out, I woke up, nothing in-between. What if, when we die, we're just gone?"

"I do not believe that," Stoick told her, "My ancestors had personally fought alongside Odin and the other gods of Asgard when the Jotun used their ice powers to try and conquer our people. It was he who told us of the life that awaits us once our life on Midgard is done, and I have to believe what he said was the truth. Perhaps you were simply not gone long enough for the Valkyries to find you, but it's not possible for someone as special as you to simply vanish off the face of the earth."

"Are you certain?" Anna asked him fretfully.

"As certain as I am that your friend Sven is actually a bottomless pit in disguise!" Stoick told her, which prompted her to turn and look to see that the hay Sven was eating was completely gone, not a bit to be seen, and he was looking around to try and find more. This elicits laughter out of the four of them, and Valka and Stoick pull Anna into a group hug as Stoick softly said to her, "It'll be all right, my dear. You are special, don't ever let anyone convince you different. And you don't have to worry, I won't tell your sister a thing."

"Thanks," Anna told him as she squeezed him back.

"Won't tell me anything about what?" Anna heard Elsa say from behind her, and she broke out of the group hug to see Elsa standing in the doorway of the blacksmith's shop, Hiccup standing just behind her.

Anna straightened herself up, crossed her arms, and gave Elsa her most irritated look (even though she was no longer feeling it) as she

said, "Just that I was feeling put out for you putting me on reindeer-sitting duty."

Elsa's raised eyebrow told Anna that she wasn't buying it, and Anna had to bite her tongue to prevent herself from bursting into giggles that would give her away for sure. Finally, Elsa was the one who chuckled and broke into a grin as she said, "Fine, you don't have to tell me now. I'm sure I'll get it out of you later." As Anna returned her smile, Elsa turned towards Stoick and said, "After talking with your son for a bit about the dragons living here, especially the ones who don't have riders, I believe we've come up with some defensive strategies to make the best use of our resources. At the very least we should be able to slow them down and prevent them from overwhelming us long enough for Hiccup and toothless to personally deal with Drago and his big dragon."

"Sounds great," Stoick told her.

"I also think that we should send messages to everyone who might still feel allegiance to us," Hiccup added, "As it stands we might be greatly outnumbered, more so than even these defenses would be able to effectively restrain for long, so any extra help in this would be most welcome."

"I agree," Valka told him.

"Then I'm glad we brought these," Anna heard one of four young Vikings who just entered say. The one who'd spoken, a rotund young man around Hiccup's age, set a pair of small cages on the table, each of which held a small dragon inside, and said as his friends followed suit, "These guys will each fly to one of the clans with which we've dealt with in the past once released. Just make sure you attach your message before you do."

"Thanks, Fishlegs," Hiccup told him gratefully.

"Sounds like we're about set, then," Anna heard Astrid say, and by craning her head around she was able to spot her by the open door in front beside Kristoff, who gave Anna a small wave and smile. After a few moments of uncomfortable silence, in which Astrid and Hiccup would look at each other then quickly away, Stoick cleared his throat and said, "We'll just leave you two alone for a moment." He then herded Anna and the others towards an entrance in the back, though Gobber had to wave his mace hand at a couple of Vikings who looked like brother and sister in order to get them to move.

They didn't go far, though, as once the back door was closed they all put their ear against it, trying to listen in. After a moment of silence Anna heard a couple of false starts as Hiccup and Astrid tried talking at the same time. Then, one moment later:

****Hiccup:**** "Astrid, I'm sorry about what happened!"

****Astrid:**** "Don't be. I'm the one who acted like an idiot earlier."

****Hiccup:**** "That's ridiculous! You have nothing to apologize for."

****Astrid:**** "Of course I do! I let myself get so wrapped up in my own

pain and humiliation over what went down on that Island that I didn't think about how you might have been feelingâ€|"

****Hiccup:**** "That's okay, Astrid. Reallyâ€|"

****Astrid:**** "Hiccup! Will you let me speak!?"

****Hiccup:**** (exclaims in pain) "Ow! Okay, okay! Go ahead."

Anna saw Stoick lock eyes with Valka and smile as he whispered, "Your son," to which Valka responded with a tight smile before they returned their ears to the door.

****Astrid:**** "What happened on the island wasn't your fault, Hiccup. If anyone should have anticipated the Flightmare's attack then that would be me. I'm the one whose family name was disgraced by that dragon, I was the first one who learned what that dragon can really do. I should have seen it coming and avoided it, but I didn't, and because of that you had to face Drago alone."

****Hiccup:**** "I understand where you're coming from, I really do, but that dragon caught us all off guard. I'm supposed to be the chief, though, not to mention the 'dragon master'. I'm supposed to guide and protect everyone. How can I do that if I'm unable to protect the one person I care most about?"

****Astrid:**** "Hiccup, do you think that your father took on every single threat this village ever faced single handed? Or that he solved all the problems we ever had he solved by himself? Of course not! When anything ever threatens us, we all band together to face it as one people, and a Chief gets his wisdom from everyone around him. Your father had all kinds of people around him to help him with ideas to run the village: Gobber, you, I'm sure that before Cloudjumper carried her off your father got plenty of good ideas from your mother."

"Smart girl, that one," Valka whispered smiling to Stoick before they went back to listening.

****Astrid:**** "I'm sure that even Mildew, in one of his less cantankerous, dragon-hating moments, managed to provide Stoick a small nugget of an idea that he correctly thought wasn't an entirely bad one. The point is that you shouldn't think that you have to handle everything alone to be a good chief. You are a good leader, you just have to let yourself believe it, and we're all here to help."

****Hiccup:**** (sighs) "Yeah, Elsa said something along those lines too."

****Astrid:**** They're good people, aren't they?

****Hiccup:**** Yeah. We're lucky to have crossed paths with them when we had.

****Astrid:**** Soâ€|.still good?

****Hiccup:**** Still good.

Another moment passed, during which the only sound Anna heard was

that of Astrid's humming sigh, thenâ€¦

****Hiccup:**** So, I was thinkingâ€¦.once this is all over, we should go and finish that conversation Drago had interrupted.

****Astrid:**** (happily) I'll be looking forward to it.

Another moment of silence passed, and Anna pressed her ear harder to the door. As she did so, the door suddenly opened inward, and everyone suddenly found themselves overbalanced as they toppled inside in an untidy dogpile. Even though she was near the top of the heap, Anna felt herself uncomfortable squished as she craned her head up and saw Hiccup looking down at them, his hand on the door and a smile on his face as he said in a teasing-but-not-unkindly tone, "Thanks for giving us a moment of privacy."

Anna chuckled in embarrassment as Gobber's muffled voice said from the bottom of the pile, "No problem." Hiccup and Astrid then helped everyone stand back up again, then Hiccup declared, "Well, we still have a bit of work to do if we're going to be ready by the time Drago gets here. We should get it done."

* * *

><p>Back at his anchor point amongst the icebergs, Drago grumbled irritably to himself. He could have gotten back here hours ago, and he probably should have. However, he had to let off some steam before he got here. If he had come here directly there was a good chance that he'd end up killing a good number of his men before he cooled down, and he needed every man he had left in order to ensure complete victory over Berk. Drago wasn't sure where the white witch had come from, what connection she had to that pathetic Hiccup, or how she managed to obtain such impressive power, but Drago promised himself he'd tear those answers and more from her screaming lips before she died.<p>

As Drago walked along the floating dock, one of his men came up to him and asked, "So, did you do it? Is it done?"

Drago simply growled at him and kept walking. The man apparently didn't know how to take a clue, as he kept pace and continued, "So you failed. Again. Hiccup, son of Stoick the Vast, is still alive."

Drago gave the man a menacing glare, but continued walking, and so the man pressed on, "That's the second time that whelp's beaten you. You might have been worth following once, but some of us are thinking you no longer have what it takâ€¦"

Drago stopped suddenl

Back at Berk, Hiccup was walking towards the edge of the village, reviewing the preparations that had been completed moments ago. Of course there were still a couple of things to put into place, things that Elsa said she would take care of just before Drago and his men arrived. She told him that would introduce a level of surprise Drago couldn't easily plan around, and Hiccup trusted her judgment on this.

As if his thinking about her brought her into being, Hiccup's eyes

found Elsa standing beside the tiered perch she'd just finished making with her ice powers a couple of hours ago, and which now stretched along the entire outer edge of the village. It was so beautiful and delicate looking that Hiccup had doubts that it could serve the purpose Elsa had described to him, that is until Grump had flown up to the highest tier (much to Gobber's irritation) and taken a nap there. When the structure withstood Grump's hard landing and the rhythmic, lazy thumping of his heavy tail, Hiccup decided that it would work just fine.

"Hey, Queen Elsa," Hiccup called out to her as he strode up to her, not wanting to startle her as she stared out at the ocean.

"Chief Hiccup," Elsa acknowledged as she turned to face him, "What's up? Need a hand with some other preparations?"

"Nope, we're pretty much set. The women and children who aren't fighting are holed up in the aerie, which is ready to be closed up as soon as Drago arrives. It might have been nice if we could have gotten enough of that special armor made for all the fighters, but since there's no feasible way we could armor our dragons sufficiently against the Flightmare it wouldn't matter much if we wore it: if our dragons go down, then we're going down with them. We'll just have to rely on our dragons' maneuverability to avoid that outcome."

Elsa nodded her understanding, saying, "Well, based on what you showed me today and on what I witnessed upon my arrival on that island, I may have come up with an idea on how we might be able to deal with the Flightmare, should Drago send it against us."

"Really?" Hiccup asked her, "Like what?"

"I don't want to say just yet, in case I'm wrong about my conclusions and my idea doesn't pan out, as I don't want to raise false hopes. I just hope I'm able to see the look on Drago's face if it does work," Elsa told him with a smile.

"I see," Hiccup acknowledged with a smile of anticipation. Then he walked to stand beside Elsa, looking out across the ocean as well as he said, "You know, I have no idea as to what is going to happen, how this will all turn out, so in case I don't get a chance to say this later I just want to say thank you for what you're doing here now. You could have chosen to take your sister and her boyfriend home after you got here, or even after you had driven off the Bewilderbeast, but you chose to stay and help us."

Hiccup saw Elsa absently finger a pendant around her neck, and even though it appeared as a simple design it was also rather strange in its appearance, the inset gem looking as though it was glowing dimly even in the darkness of this night. "Thanks, but I couldn't leave, not really," Elsa said after a moment, "I don't really know my way home from here, nor do I know anyone here well enough to be able to ask them to guide me. Even if I could find my way one way or another, I couldn't just leave you to face that creep alone. My conscience wouldn't allow that. Besides, I've come to think of you as a friend in the short time I've come to know you, and no matter what I don't abandon my friends."

"I see, well I thank you anyways," Hiccup told her, and Elsa smiled

and nodded in acknowledgement. Anna walked up and stood next to Elsa on her other side. When Anna also saw the pendant Elsa was fingering, Anna gave her sister a curious smile, asking, "Now Elsa, you weren't just thinking of contacting Julian to ask him if he could take me home without you, now were you?"

"Huh?" Elsa said, caught off guard, "What doâ€|whyâ€|what are you talking about?"

"Come on, you always finger that pendant whenever you think about him," Anna said slyly, "Now stop evading and answer my question: Were you just thinking about think about calling him to take me home?"

Elsa sighed and chuckled in exasperation as she said, "I cannot deny that the thought had crossed my mindâ€|.briefly, but no, I wasn't seriously considering contacting him."

"Well good," Anna replied, "Because the only way I would go home now is if you were going with me, and I think we both know you well enough to know that isn't happening, not with what is facing these people. So it's rather simple: you stay - I stay, you go - I go."

Elsa sighed and chuckled softly, asking, "When did you get to be so stubborn?"

"Don't know, probably just backlash from years of you locking yourself in your room with no explanation," Anna told her, still smiling warmly, "Don't worry about it, just know that from now until we get back home you're stuck with me."

Elsa chuckled again, then she squinted in the dim light as Hiccup asked her, "So, this Julian, is he someoneâ€|.special to you?"

"Julian'sâ€|.a long story," Elsa answered him as she continued to focus her gaze in the same direction, an icicle forming in her hand. As she put the smaller end to her eye, which Hiccup noticed was flat and not pointed, Anna asked her, "Elsa, what is it?"

Elsa stared through her icicle for a moment longer, which Hiccup figured was working like a spyglass, then she lowered it and said, "Hiccup, go get the others."

Hiccup put the pieces together in his head, then he asked, "Elsa, did you just seeâ€|?"

Elsa nodded as she said, "It's Drago. He's here."

y and his good arm shot forward, his grip choking off the man's insolent words as he lifted him from the pier by the neck. Then, with a powerful swing, Drago tossed the man behind him, his body clearing the stern of the nearest ship. The man's yells were only heard for a few seconds before they were drowned out by a tremendous splash as his Bewilderbeast leapt out of the water, caught the naysayer cleanly in his mouth, then dived back into the frozen depths.

Belatedly, Drago recalled that he took his time returning in order to prevent his killing any of his men, then he mentally shrugged as he

figured one less man won't make much of a difference. Drago didn't know whether his Bewilderbeast actually ate the dogs he tossed him or if it just left them floating under an iceberg, but either way it served as a good example to those who remained.

"Does anyone else think I no longer have what it takes!?" Drago bellowed to the others who'd watched the spectacle with wide, fearful eyes. Drago didn't hear anyone respond, he wasn't sure that he even heard anyone dare to take a breath. "Then load everything onto the ships and weigh anchor!" Drago ordered them in the same volume, "We set sail immediately! Berk will not see another sunrise!"

4. Chapter 4: Siege

****Siege****

With the armada of ships closer now, it was possible to see them without the aid of a spyglass. From what she could see, there were even more ships here than there were when the Duke invaded Arendelle and they were larger as well, and Elsa doubted that all of that extra size was for arms and the dragons under Drago's control.

"Are you sure that these friends of yours will respond to your call for aid?" Elsa asked Hiccup, doing the numbers in her head and not caring too much for the result she came up with.

"Not at all, really," Hiccup answered her as he looked around at the people who would be fighting alongside them today, "Our decision to befriend the dragons rather than killing them wasn't exactly popular among our allies. The best outcome we've gotten from them finding out was their declaration they wanted nothing to do with us and our 'strange ways'."

"Well I sure hope someone comes, because we're seriously outnumbered here," Fishlegs said nervously as he viewed the approaching ships with his spyglass, and Elsa imagined he just did a headcount of his own.

"Eh, we'll be fine," Stoick assured him, "We've faced these kinds of odds before, when it was just us riders back at the nest with no plan and no warning. Now we have all of Berk and her dragons with us, not to mention Queen Elsa and her friends."

Elsa didn't want to correct Stoick, as the Vikings here were probably pretty nervous already, but the truth was that she too hoped that some aid would come. She had formulated this plan by basing it on classic defense strategy against forces laying siege to a castle. Looking around at the riderless dragons perched on the tiered perch, which currently formed the perimeter of Berk, with their human companions standing on the ground nearby, Elsa knew that this strategy was sound. Regardless, she still had a feeling that it wouldn't be enough, that the best they'd manage would be to slow them down. When this Drago brings out his Bewilderbeast they might not manage even that, as there really wasn't any place around her large or stable enough to summon her giant-sized Marshmallow (at least not without seriously harming the ocean life around here).

Ironically enough, the Bewilderbeast that may be instrumental in Berk's defeat was also, to Elsa's understanding, the key to their

victory. Over the course of their preparations, Hiccup had told her how Toothless' driving off the Bewilderbeast in their first encounter had demoralized Drago's army before and sent them packing. Elsa sincerely hoped that would happen this time too once Hiccup and Toothless beat it. If they didn't flee this time as well, of if Drago didn't even bring his great dragon in until it's practically all overâ€¦|

Elsa kept these concerns to herself, simply taking a moment to look Hiccup in the eye and nod determinedly. Then, once Drago's armada was within the area Elsa had marked in her head, she fired an ice blast at the water just ahead of them. Just as she'd planned, the waters around the vessels quickly froze before they could spread out enough to make containment a problem. As the ice connected to the rocky outcroppings some yards out from Berk's pier, Elsa heard the loud creak-cracking of the ships hulls as the unseen Bewilderbeast continued its attempts to pull the immobile ships forward. While Elsa concentrated on halting the ice floe's growth and began erecting the three inset ice walls between Drago and the open water that still separated the armada from Berk, she heard Drago bellow a command (likely for his dragon to stop pulling before it tore the ships to splinters) just before Hiccup cried out, "Fire!"

Elsa then felt the heat as the upper row of dragons, which Hiccup had helped choose their placement for their having the longest range of attacks, began their barrage by peppering the ships with fire blasts. Of course Elsa had expected this invading group of Vikings to be made of sterner stuff than the Duke's forces or the pirates who'd kidnapped her and invaded Neverland, so she wasn't entirely surprised when the men poured from the ships and began to offload some of their siege arsenal right there, returning fire with flaming boulders flung from catapults even as a number of armored dragons lifted up from the ships' holds.

As Elsa began to summon the group of 10 foot Marshmallows to defend the walls from Drago's men, she saw Hiccup climb on Toothless and called out to his group of riders, "Okay guys, let's go!" then as one they lit off to meet the group of opposing dragons along with a third of the dragons that were perched on the middle tier, leaving Stoick, Gobber, Valka and Eret on standby with their own dragons. Elsa tried to not let herself get distracted as she fired her ice blasts at the hail of stones, the ice extinguishing the flames and weighing down the boulders so they just splashed down harmlessly in the ocean below, but Elsa had to admit that the aerial battle was impressive to say the least, quite unlike anything she's ever seen before or that she'd ever likely see again.

The Vikings under Drago's command attempted to use their arsenal, like giant crossbows that fired weighted nets, to capture or cripple the dragons keeping them from their conquest. While they did manage some success with those who didn't have riders directly directing their actions, but those dragons were almost immediately freed and made airborne again by Hiccup and his riders. Of course how each dragon and rider acted as a single unit was rather impressive, but that was nothing compared to how Hiccup and Toothless commanded not only them but also all those dragons without riders. Watching those two in action, Elsa now understood why the other, much larger Vikings of Berk would consider him their leader.

As Elsa looked over at the other Vikings beside her, who looked tense

even as they encouraged the remaining dragons to continue their assault, she heard a bone chilling screech above her. When she looked up to see, Elsa could have sworn that she went as pale as the beast that hovered just overhead even as some smaller, similar green dragons hovered nearby. Stoick, who was standing next to her, did look pale as he whispered, "Screaming Death."

This creature was huge: thin like a snake and long enough to wrap around the body of the Bewilderbeast at least once, which Elsa assumed if that happened the spiked that covered its entire body would do the great dragon some serious damage. As it glared down with its red eyes and its fanged mouth ajar, Elsa prepared an ice blast to drive it off. Before she could, however, a flaming boulder Elsa had let get through because she was distracted crashed into the side of the Screaming Death's bulbous head. This only seemed to infuriate it, however, as it turned and shredded the offending catapult while its smaller fellows made swiss cheese of a nearby ship as they tunneled through it.

Watching in awe at the devastation wrought by the newcomer rogue dragons, Elsa heard a low voice full of menace say, "Well, well. What have we here?" Whirling around, she saw behind them a group of Vikings that she did not recognize. Even if she had failed to see them during her aiding Hiccup in the preparations for defense, Elsa would have still picked them out as being not from around here due to their differing armor style and their general unkempt appearance. Elsa was certain that she had accounted and contained Drago's entire force, but she reasoned they must have split up before they came into view.

As Stoick turned towards the larger of them, whom Elsa could have sworn was even larger than Stoick, he addressed the newcomer, "Alvin the Treacherous."

The large Viking narrowed his eyes as he said, "Stoick the Vast." He then strode towards them, and Stoick marched up to meet him with a determined expression. They stopped mere feet from one another, and Elsa could feel the tension thicken as they stood and stared into each other's eyes.

Then the tension broke as they both laughed and clasped their right hands between them, using their other hand to pat the other's shoulder. Once the laughter died down, Stoick wiped the tears of mirth from his eye as he said, "It's been too long, you old scoundrel! Where you been?"

"Oh you know, just hanging out on Outcast Island," Alvin answered, "Trying to learn how to tame the dragons there, though Mildew isn't nearly as good a trainer as your boy up there. In fact, we were in the middle of a session when we got your note on that Terrible Terror you sent our way. When we saw that Screaming Death we'd planted on your island all those years ago heading back this way, we figured that it was serious, so we decided to join in the fun."

"Well we're glad you're here," Stoick told him, "What about the others? They coming too?"

"'Fraid not, old friend," Alvin replied, "I'm afraid the others aren't as progressive as us Outcasts and Berkians. It's just you and me, just like old times!"

"Stoick? You have a friend named 'Alvin the Treacherous'?" Elsa asked in confusion.

"It used to be Alvin the Poor-but-Honest-Farmer, but I disagreed with one of Stoick's orders on how to defend the village, and when people got hurt as a result I got banished with my new nickname," Alvin answered her, then he whispered to Stoick (though his large voice carried anyway), "Who's the slip?"

Stoick told Alvin in a normal voice, "Alvin, this here is Queen Elsa of Arendelle. She's been instrumental in the defense of Berk, creating both this defensive scaffolding and the ice Drago's armada is stuck in."

Alvin's eyes widened in surprise as he asked in disbelief, "This girl did all that!?"

Elsa stretched her arm out to the side, blasting out of the sky without looking a boulder large enough to crush the three of them together as she said, "Yeah. Andâ€¦?"

"Nothing! I didn't mean anything by it at all!" Alvin said quickly, raising his hands defensively as he added, "In fact, some of my best friends, aside from Stoick, just happen to be Jotun!"

"Just one minute, I am NOTâ€¦!" Elsa started to defend herself, then she sighed, resigning herself to the likelihood she'll continue to get this reaction while she's in this time and place as she said in a low voice, "â€¦never mind."

Valka stepped forward and crossed her arms as she narrowed her eyes and said, "Alvin, I truly hope that you're actually here to help, and that this isn't just another plan of yours to find a way to attack my husband again."

"Ah, Valka. Glad to see that Stormcutter didn't eat you after all," Alvin acknowledged with a smile, then he waved dismissively as he added, "Yeah, Stoick and I worked out our differences during that business with the Bezerkers a couple years ago. I don't blame you for not trusting me though, ma'am, as you weren't here during that time." Alvin then turned back towards Stoick as he said, "In fact, old friend, I ran into an old friend of yours on the way here who was just as suspicious as your wife here."

As Stoick raised his eyebrow in curiosity, Elsa heard a jaw-rattling report like thunder overhead. When she looked up, she saw a quartet of dragons flying overhead with a cloud of dust that apparently was a boulder that had just been blown to bits. Though they were similar in body style, with spindly legs, two sets of wings, and large and wide yet flat heads with toothy grins, one was significantly larger than the other three, and they all were different colors; ranging from light green to purple, with a couple shades of blue in between.

"Thornado!" Stoick exclaimed in surprised delight, and the crowd of Vikings as the larger, dark blue dragon landed amongst them, then the other, smaller dragons landed as well as the larger one strutted up to Stoick and nuzzled him affectionately as he said, "Yes, old friend. I've missed you as well. I think you've grown even more since

we were last together."

" 'Thornado'," Elsa guessed, "because his mouth looks like a row of thorns?"

Stoick let out a hearty laugh before answering, "No, milady, because his voice has the power of Thor and he's as fierce as a tornado."

Elsa wasn't sure what that meant, so when she looked her way Valka explained, "Thunderdrums like Thornado and the young ones with him are tidal class dragons. While they are quite capable of flight, they move best whirling through the water like a tornado. Additionally, the Thunderdrum's primary attack is its voice, which it releases in a burst of pure sound force capable of killing a man at close range. That thunder-like sound likely came from Thornado himself. Of course it also has a powerful fire blast as well, but it takes a lot of the Thunderdrum's energy to produce it, so it rarely uses it if ever."

Elsa nodded as she understood this explanation better. Of course she'd never heard of anyone or anything using sound as a weapon before, but after all that she'd seen since her parent's return to Arendelle she supposed that little would surprise her anymore. She didn't have long to think about it, however, as the purple Thunderdrum inexplicably strode up to Anna. Caught off guard by this reaction, Anna backed up nervously though she couldn't go far with the crowd of Berkians behind her. When Anna put out her hand defensively, the purple Thunderdrum touched its snout to her palm and closed its eyes.

"Well I'll be! It seems that Boom has really taken a shine to you Anna," Stoick remarked in an impressed tone, "Or was his name Lloyd? I don't remember if he had gotten a proper name before he and the other fledglings left with Thornado."

"Hmm, he actually looks more like a 'Thunderhead' to me," Anna said thoughtfully. When the dragon spun around quickly in delight, Anna let out a small smile as she said, "What's that, boy? You like the name Thunderhead?"

"Anyway, I don't think I've ever seen a dragon take to someone quite this quickly before," Stoick remarked, "How about you, Valka love? You've spent more time studying dragons than any of us, you ever see anything like this before?"

"Can't say I have," Valka told him, "Even with dragons who've had experience being around humans would still take time building trust before forming a bond like this. The fastest I've ever heard of a bond forming was between Toothless and our Hiccup. This is quite fascinating. You said they used to live here, right? Did Hiccup or the others do some special training with them?"

"They did live here, but while Hiccup and the other tried training them they were still fledglings, too young to listen, so Thornado and I had to part ways while he raised them alone on Dragon Island. Stillâ€¦ Boom, or rather Thunderhead looks to be about the right size nowâ€¦" Stoick said thoughtfully. Then, after a brief moment, Stoick turned to Gobber and ordered, "Go get Thornado's old saddle out of storage, would you?"

"You got it, Stoick," Gobber acknowledged as he quickly hobbled off.

Elsa watched him walk into a building in the distance, then after bringing down a boulder the dragons on the scaffolding weren't able to handle she asked Stoick, "What are you thinking?"

"Well, Thunderhead is about the same size Thornado was when I used to ride him, so I thought your sister might like to use it to ride Thunderhead," Stoick told her.

"Me!? Ride him!?" Anna exclaimed, sounding nervous again.

"What's wrong, dear? You said you wanted to be involved more," Valka asked in a concerned tone, "and you said you've flown before."

"Yes, but that was by myself under the power of pixie dust," Anna explained, "I've never ridden anything like a dragon before. Of course I've ridden Sven bareback with Kristoff before, back when he was rushing me back to the castle to try and save me from freezing to death by Elsa's power, but the one time I tried to ride a horse by myself, to go after her in the first place, it got spooked and I was thrown off after only a couple of miles."

"Well you won't have to worry about that happening with Thunderhead here," Valka assured her, "Most dragons would not allow harm to befall the human they've bonded with, and that's especially true of the Thunderdrums, who are extremely compassionate."

"In addition, you won't have to worry about the saddle here, lass" Gobber said as he returned, carrying the saddle aloft, "This here is one of the finest I've ever worked on, with only Toothless' surpassing it in workmanship." As Gobber set the saddle in place, he adjusted the straps and said, "And it looks like you were correct, Stoick. It fits this young one perfectly."

"Well, I suppose it wouldn't hurt to spend some time with this sweet little guy," Anna conceded, "and it sure would beat waiting around here for Drago's men to find their way past Elsa's walls and her troop of Marshmallows."

"That's the spirit!" Stoick said as he picked Anna up and set her in the saddle, looping the extra length of the rope on Anna's frying pan around the saddle's horn to make it into a makeshift harness, then he handed the reins to Anna as he said, "Just hold on tight and trust Thunderhead's instincts and you'll be just fine."

Elsa thought Anna looked as nervous as she sounded as she said, "You know, now that I'm actually up here, I think I changed myâ€¦" But Stoick was already in motion, smacking Thunderhead lightly yet soundly on his rump near the base of his tail, and the dragon lifted off into the air as Anna said, "miiiiiiinnnd!"

As he watched Anna and the dragon rise into the air, Kristoff absently cradled his new warhammer in both hands as asked no one in particular in a concerned voice, "Do you think she'll be fine up there?"

"Better than she would be down here," Valka answered him,

"Thunderhead's strong bond with Anna will prompt him to protect her with his life, so it's unlikely that any of Drago's dragons will be able to even get close to touching her."

"She's right," Stoick said as he also stared after the dragon with a longing look in his eye, "If there's one thing I recall very well, it's just how loyal and dependable a Thunderdrum can be."

After a still moment, during which the only sounds were that of the battle continuing both below and overhead, Alvin finally said, "Oh, go on and give your boy a hand already, Stoick. I know you're just dying to. My men and I will make sure none of Drago's men get past us, should they even make it this far."

"Well, I suppose I could see how well Hiccup and the others are faring," Stoick said with a reluctance that even Elsa could tell was half-hearted, "but I leave my wife and Queen Elsa in charge down here. This plan is as much Elsa's as it is my son's anyways."

"Sure, that's fine," Alvin agreed, "Just get going already."

Stoick nodded, then he climbed on his green and red horned dragon as he turned towards Thornado and asked, "How about it, old friend? Once more unto the breach together?"

Thornado responded with a roar, then Stoick and his dragon took off with the three remaining Thunderdrums following after. As Elsa blasted yet another boulder out of the sky and Eret petted his dragon, who was looking a bit antsy, Valka looked askance at Alvin as she said, "I'll be keeping an eye on you."

Alvin chuckled as he said, "Milady, I wouldn't expect anything less."

* * *

><p>For the first couple of moments, all Anna felt was the terror of being onboard a gigantic beast as it sped through the sky. Then, as her mind calmed and Thunderhead blasted the first of Drago's armored dragons of its path with its great voice, Anna's heart began racing instead with exhilaration as she was able to focus again on the familiar sensation of the wind rushing past her face, a sensation she hadn't really felt since Neverland and New York.<p>

"Thunderhead!" Anna exclaimed with delight, "You're magnificent!"

Thunderhead roared in delight at the praise, which drew the attention of Hiccup and Toothless as they drew near. Anna saw Hiccup's eyes widen in surprise under his mask as he saw her clearly. "Princess Anna?" Hiccup asked in a shocked tone, "Just what are you doing up here? And is that Boom with you?"

"Hey, Hiccup!" Anna greeted him with a wave, keeping one hand tightly on the reins as she patted Thunderhead affectionately and said, "Apparently he goes by the name Thunderhead now, but since this guy seemed to like me so much your dad said I should ride him."

"Father," Hiccup said chuckling while shaking his head in disbelief,

"Some things never change. I'm surprised that you two bonded so quickly, but to think that father still believes it's that easy for anyone to ride dragons, let alone into battle."

"Well Thunderhead's doing all of the flying and fighting," Anna said with a smile, "I'm just along for the ride."

Hiccup laughed and said, "I guess we all were like that in the beginning. Come to think of it, we were even crazier back then, considering most of us had just started to ride our dragons the day we took on the Red Death. Compared to that day, which cost me my leg, this should be a walk in the park."

Anna smiled at Hiccup's good humor, though she didn't think she could be as flippant about losing a body part like that. As she was reflecting on that, Astrid flew towards them on Stormfly asking, "Is that Anna riding on Boom?"

"It seems that his name is Thunderhead now, but yes," Hiccup confirmed, "Dad's idea."

Astrid sighed and smiled as she said, "Of course it was. Well, Anna, there's plenty of fight up here to share. I guess if you take it easy and just follow Thunderhead's lead it'll be fine."

Anna nodded in agreement, then she patted Thunderhead's side as she asked, "Well, boy? Are you ready to show me what you can really do?"

Thunderhead roared his agreement, then the three riders and their dragons rejoined their comrades in the heart of the fray.

* * *

><p>Drago could not believe what he was seeing. He had counted on Hiccup being broken by his being defeated in combat by his hands. Even though that ice enchantress had managed to stop him from taking Hiccup out for good, Drago had figured the demonstration of the difference in power between the so-called "dragon master" and his own would have taken much of the fight out of Berk's new chief, making it a simple matter of him sailing in and taking claim of his dominionship of this land. That's why he hadn't summoned the Flightmare into battle nor called the Bewilderbeast to obliterate the place. He hadn't expected to have his armada stuck frozen in an iceberg before it was close enough to land by the witch, nor had he counted on one of the interlopers being a skilled rider in her own right. He certainly hadn't counted on his hand picked men being stymied by a mere handful of snow creatures.<p>

Well, he can still show these people who should be their leader, and maybe it would be better with an audience anyway. Once this village sees their puny leader fall from the sky and end up broken on the rocks below, their spirits will likewise be broken. Then they'll either finally accept him as their leader or they'll join Hiccup in oblivion. With that thought bolstering him, he called his Flightmare to come bring the dragon riders back down to earth.

* * *

><p>The first warning sign Hiccup saw was a brightening glow that was

not the rising sun, then he had Toothless roll out of the way just as the Flightmare appeared in their faces, narrowly avoiding its paralyzing breath.<p>

"The Flightmare's here," Hiccup warned the others, "evasive maneuvers!"

The others didn't need any additional prompting, as they were already on guard once the Flightmare zoomed into their midst. Luckily it seemed to be mostly focused in him and Toothless, leading Hiccup to believe that it may in fact be the same Flightmare he'd faced off against together with Astrid a couple of years ago (that or the Flightmares simply have a rivalry thing against Night Furies like Toothless), but that knowledge did nothing to help them. Even if it were the right time of year for the special glowing algae the Flightmare preferred to eat, the stuff they'd used to drive it off years ago, there was no way they could get to the stream it flowed from as long as the Flightmare kept them on the defensive, and if they tried then Drago's dragons would overrun the village.

There was no denying that they were in a tough spot. Elsa had said that she had a plan for dealing with the Flightmare. If there was anytime to put that plan into effect, it was now.

* * *

><p>Elsa had seen when Drago finally summoned the Flightmare to the battle. She had been expecting it, practically counting on it, but she hadn't planned on her sister Anna being among the dragon riders being menaced by the glowing dragon and its breath which would render her helpless to prevent herself from falling like a stone. Of course the plan itself hadn't changed, but now the stakes were so much higher. Not that there was much room for it before, but now there was no room at all for failure.<p>

Elsa fired an ice blast at the Flightmare. The nimble creature dodged it easily, but Elsa had never truly intended to hit it, only to get its attention. In that she'd succeeded, as it whirled around and roared angrily at her, and its roar seemed to have a disorienting effect on all the dragons that were close by. It then soared directly towards her.

"Here it comes!" Valka called out as she readied her staff, "Get ready everyone!"

"No, everyone stay back!" Elsa told them, "Leave this to me."

"Queen Elsa?" Valka asked her in confusion.

"I've got this," Elsa told her, "Trust me!"

As she prepared for the next phase of her plan, Elsa thought of how this dragon reacted to her when she first arrived in these lands. Then, when it was closer she used her gift to cool the air around her hands, leaving a trail of mist as she waved them around mesmerizingly. As before, the Flightmare stuttered and stopped in its advance mere feet away from Elsa, staring at her in confusion.

"I thought that she was going to freeze that dragon solid," Alvin said to Valka in bewilderment, "Just what is that girl

doing?"

"Iâ€¦.don't know," Valka told him, just as bewildered.

Elsa paid them no heed, concentrating instead on her dance of mist and keeping eye contact with the Flightmare, even as she thought back to the things Hiccup had taught her about dragons while they were making their defensive preparations. One line of his came foremost to her mind: "Once a dragon sees you as one of its own," Hiccup had told her, "there's nothing it won't do for you."

As the Flightmare's body language became less and less aggressive, Elsa knew her idea was working. Of course it probably helped that the moonlight refracted through her mist, making her dress appear as if it was glowing like the Flightmare. Finally, when the dragon stopped hovering and landed on the cliff before her, Elsa stopped her mist dance and simply held her hand out before her. When the Flightmare touched its snout to her hand, the Vikings around her let out gasps of amazement even as Valka softly breathed, "Incredible! You sisters are something else. Are you sure you don't have dragons back where you come from?"

"Not that I've seen," Elsa told Valka as the Flightmare nuzzled her affectionately, "Plenty of rock trolls for future relatives, however." Elsa then turned to one of the Vikings and cried out, "You there! I need to borrow your cloak!"

As Elsa accepted the offered fur cloak from the Viking, Valka asked her, "Night getting a little cold for you, your Highness?"

"For me? Never," Elsa told Valka as she draped the cloak across the Flightmare's back, "I simply intend to give Drago a taste of his own medicine." Elsa then used her gift to form a saddle of ice on top of the cloak, securing it under the dragon's belly and completing it with reins and a bridle. Elsa then climbed onboard and turned towards the others as she said, "Kristoff, Valka, Alvin: I leave the cliff defense to you."

As the others nodded their acknowledgement, Elsa then gripped the reins tightly, saying to the dragon, "Okay, Aurora, let's go!" as the dragon took flight. Blasting a couple of boulders in passing, Elsa caught surprised looks from Anna and Hiccup as they flew by. Then they were swooping down over the armada. As Elsa froze the nets and flung blades that tried to bring them down, the Flightmare bathed Drago's men with its paralyzing breath. Even though they were alive after a fashion, Elsa's remaining Marshmallows were unaffected by the poison. With the enemy frozen like statues, Elsa's snow army met no resistance as they smashed the remaining catapults and trap launchers.

As their latest pass took them by his ship, Elsa felt Drago's enraged glare burning into her. Then when they began climbing again, she heard him bellow a roar, followed by a louder roar and cracking sound. Looking down, Elsa saw the Bewilderbeast burst through the ice. A good number of the ships in Drago's armada were also destroyed, but it seemed he no longer cared about that, determined to win at any cost. The walls Elsa had erected fell as the iceberg they were erected on fractured, the outer one now acting as a bridge that reached most of the way to Berk's pier. Even some of Drago's men were able to move again as the sloshing ocean water washed off the

Flightmare's poison or it wore off, though many of them were struggling to stay on their feet or to climb back on the ice as they fell into the ocean. As the men began to make their way across the ice to Berk's pier, Elsa saw Drago climb on the Bewilderbeast's head before it headed towards Berk's cliffs as well. The dragons remaining on the island attempted to defend it, with fire blasts, streams of flame and molten rock, but they scattered when the Bewilderbeast blasted the scaffolding with its frosty breath and shattered it.

As the great beast began to scale the cliffs, Elsa knew that there was little else she or the Flightmare could do. While she could perhaps try again to create a giant Marshmallow, it would take time to both form an area it could battle from as well as to form him, and she said before that she feared what that would do to the sea life around here, and thus to their livelihood. Additionally, Elsa figured that the Flightmare's breath wouldn't do much against a beast that size. No, from this point forward it was up to Hiccup and his dragons to end this thing.

* * *

><p>As the Bewilderbeast started to climb the cliffs, Hiccup knew that the defenders there would need help. Besides, the resistance up here was thinning out, so the Bewilderbeast was now the larger threat. As they flew back towards Berk, Hiccup could feel the others following after. Down below he could see his mother and Gobber fighting alongside Eret and the others against Drago's men as the Bewilderbeast got ever closer, and if he wasn't mistaken Alvin and his Outcasts were down there fighting too.<p>

As they got closer, he noticed Drago riding on the crest of the Bewilderbeast's head. Having borne witness to the kind of a Bewilderbeast can do, even one that was not under the control of a madman like Drago, Hiccup could not let them get any closer. Locking Toothless' tail fin into position, Hiccup leapt off and opened the glider fins of his suit.

Drago must have spotted his approach, or else he had been watching out for him, for he gestured with his hook-spear and the Bewilderbeast turned its head towards him. Hiccup briefly considered whether or not the shield would provide him adequate protection against the ice breath attack if he held it before him, though he wasn't sure how he'd be able to do so and remain gliding.

Before he could work it out or the great dragon could attack, Drago had to duck as a barrage of fireballs, sonic blasts, spikes, and powerful ice shots assaulted the Bewilderbeast from its other side. Before Drago could recover Hiccup released the gliding fins, holding the shield in front of him as he allowed gravity and his own momentum to send him slamming into Drago at full speed.

As he recovered from the rough landing, Hiccup saw Drago scrambling for his spear some distance away. Pushing himself up quickly into a kneeling position, Hiccup pulled the shield off his arm and threw it at him. The throw just missed him, but the shield rebounded between a couple corners of a house behind him then broke off the tip of his spear before Hiccup caught it on the way back to him.

Drago glared back and forth between his broken weapon and Hiccup, but before he could make any kind of retort a bellowing roar drew both of

their attentions. Hiccup looked and saw that the Bewilderbeast had climbed up to the point where both of his front legs were resting on the edge of the cliff, but now he was held at bay as every single dragon in Berk, save for a few of Drago's dragons (who were still hovering in the air in confusion) and the Flightmare, were assaulting the great dragon with a barrage of fire and sonic blasts so thick it didn't have room to retaliate.

"No! Not again!" Drago yelled as he started to run towards his dragon, "Don't let them beat you again! Fight!" He didn't get to finish, as a cascade of mist fell on him before he got within a couple of yards of the dragon, and he stood as stiff as a statue while Elsa and her Flightmare landed by Hiccup. As she dismounted, Elsa narrowed her eyes at the would-be conqueror and said, "That's quite enough out of you," and the Flightmare grunted her agreement.

The barrage only went on for a couple more minutes, during which Elsa joined in with a punishing hailstorm while the Flightmare stood guard over her to ensure none of Drago's men thought her vulnerable and attacked (not that any dared). Then, as the sun began to rise past the horizon, the former Alpha decided it had enough. The good people of Berk cheered when the giant Bewilderbeast slipped from its perch on the cliffs at the edge of town and retreated back beneath the waves of the ocean, hopefully to never be seen again. When Drago's forces saw the symbol of their strength quit the battlefield, they lowered their weapons in surrender.

Drago, on the other hand, refused to admit defeat. Despite having lost his dragons, his forces, and his weapon, Drago was still determined to conquer Berk. "Look out!" Elsa heard her sister cry out, but Elsa had already seen the enraged conqueror charging her with his broken spear and was preparing an ice blast even as Hiccup prepared to defend her with his own sword and shield. Before he could get within 5 feet, however, a brilliant pillar of light slammed down on the ground between them with such force that even behind Hiccup's amazing shield Elsa was nearly knocked off her feet just as Drago himself was.

"Enough!" a powerful voice commanded from within the pillar of light before dimming. When Elsa was able to see again, he saw that the man within the light looked as powerfully built as his voice. Standing in a circle that was scorched in a peculiar pattern, he was donned in scaled armor studded with large disks like the heads of giant rivets, had a red cape draped from his broad shoulders, over which his long blond hair flowed, his arm was ripped with muscles as big around as Kristoff's head, and in one of his hands was a heavy looking war hammer that had a leather strap attached to its handle.

Once the Vikings caught sight of this man, they first gawked in amazement at him, then almost as one they all fell to their knees in a deep bow. Even Drago's men fell at the feet of this warrior. The only ones who did not bow in subjugation to this man was Anna, Kristoff, herself, and Drago. Though he looked as stunned at the appearance of this man as the others, he took one look at Hiccup in his vulnerable position and again attempted to charge him with his weapon. Before Elsa could summon up another ice blast, however, Drago was knocked back several feet by a flying hammer (which Elsa recognized as belonging to the newcomer) hitting his chest. Instead of continuing on its flight trajectory, however, the hammer reversed

course and returned to the warrior's hand.

"I said enough!" the warrior bellowed. As this warrior's grip tightened on his hammer, he scowled down at Drago as he said, "You have been defeated three times now in honorable combat, yet you still refuse to acknowledge your better! Are you incapable of shame!?"

"But, Lord Thor!" Drago started to protest.

"Silence!" the man addressed as Thor yelled as he extended his hammer, and Elsa watched in amazement as lightning struck the hammer's head, even though it the clouds in the sky were not optimal for lightning. As Drago cringed away, Thor continued, "I had watched as long as I could, watching as you tried again and again to conquer these noble people to no avail. Watched as they and their allies defeated you again and again despite what lowly tactics you tried. I waited to see if you would ever learn your lesson and seek another path. No more!"

"But!" Drago tried again, but when Thor's gaze tightened again Drago clammed up.

"Here is my decision," Thor declared in a commanding voice, "As you have proven to be a dishonorable man incapable of civilized behavior, you are hereby banished from society. You will set sail by yourself and find some distant island to live out the rest of thine days alone. You will not try and seek out your dragon again, whom thou had treated so shabbily, nor will you go anywhere near any other human dwelling. Should you try and defy this command, know that there isn't one corner of Midgard where I cannot smite thee down. Understand?"

Elsa saw Drago go as white as a sheet, and after a moment of stammering and a couple of swallows he managed to get out, "Y-y-yes, milord!"

"Then go, and trouble these people no more," Thor commanded him as he pointed out towards the docks with his hammer. As Drago slunk off, he met Elsa's gaze one more time, but she did not see any of the hate or superiority that was there before. Instead, what she saw was the look of a broken man, and he did not even try to pick up his broken weapon again as he passed, but rather simply descended the steps to the dock and out of sight.

* * *

><p>After a moment of calm, Anna hopped off of Thunderhead's back and ran over to Elsa as she hugged her and exclaimed, "We did it, Elsa! We won!"<p>

"Yes, we did, and you did great up there," Elsa complimented her in an amazed tone, feeling quite stunned that it was really over as she looked over at Kristoff and said as Anna embraced him as well, "You did pretty good too."

"Yeah, thanks for leaving a couple for me, you guys," Kristoff said lightly with a chuckle, scratching Sven between the ears with his free hand as he hefted the warhammer in his other and added, "Glad to see this wasn't unused completely."

Elsa chuckled, then she turned towards Thor and said, "I suppose that we should thank you as well, Thor, sir. If you hadn't stepped in when you did, then Drago might have dragged this out even longer and someone might have gotten hurt."

"Uhâ€¦.Elsa?" Hiccup whispered to her in trepidation, apparently concerned that she was breaking some code of etiquette.

"That's quite all right, Chief Hiccup, you may stand," Thor assured him, then he raised his voice and told the others, "You all may stand. You have earned yourselves a great victory, and this day is not one to be spent on one's knees."

"You have my eternal gratitude, Lord Thor, for personally coming to my village's aid," Stoick said with a deep bow.

"Think nothing of it, noble Stoick, for your son and his allies had this battle won before I'd intervened," Thor replied with a small bow of his own, "I merely put a stop to Drago's tantrums."

"All the same, I cannot thank you enough," Stoick told him as he placed one fist over his heart in a salute, then he walked over towards Alvin to thank him.

"Excuse me, mister Thor," Anna asked in a voice that was low enough to not be overheard by anyone save for Elsa and Kristoff, though Hiccup and Astrid were close enough to hear it anyway, "but you're not really a god, are you?"

Astrid gasped in shock, but Elsa ignored her as she clarified, "What my sister means is that back when we were back home in Arendelle, a friend we'd just met had, as he showed us some events from his life, talked about having met long-lived beings who were once revered and feared as gods, and in those memories we'd seen someone who looked an awful lot like you."

"I see. So I was correct in my belief that you three are not from around here," Thor said with a thoughtful nod, "Who was this friend of yours?"

"Julian Hynes," Elsa told him, though she worked hard to suppress the twinge uttering that name gave her heart.

"Ah yes, Julian. I'm glad to hear my old comrade is still alive and well," Thor said with a smile, then with a meaningful look at Hiccup and Astrid he told Elsa, "Please don't tell the others, as I have no wish to disrupt their beliefs, but your sister is correct. Even though I and the rest of my people in the realm of Asgard are certainly longer lived than you are here in Midgard, and we possess abilities many of you do not, the fact is that we are not gods."

"Oh," Anna said, sounding somewhat disappointed that she was right, "It's just that the four of us, including Sven, have gotten kinda lost, and I was hoping that you had some way you could return us home to our own time."

"I'm afraid that is beyond my power, and even if I had access to the proper Infinity Stone I'm afraid you would not be strong enough to

make the journey," Thor told her regretfully. When Anna looked even more despondent, Thor said with a significant look at Elsa's pendant, "Do not lose heart though, child, for you already know someone who can bring you home, and if I'm not mistaken you also have a means by which to contact him."

Elsa also looked down at her pendant and she knew who he was talking about. However, even though her hand reached up towards it, it stopped short of actually grabbing hold. "What's wrong, Elsa?" Anna asked her, sensing her hesitation.

"I guess I'm a bit afraid," Elsa admitted, "What if I call him and he doesn't come?"

"You need not worry, milady," Thor assured her, "He would not have given you that if he did not mean for you to use it in a time like this, and the Julian I knew would not back out on a promise like this. If he does not show, however, you can bet I'll find him and have some choice words with him myself."

Elsa let his words sink in, then she nodded and took a deep breath as she gathered her courage. Elsa then strode towards the ruined ice scaffolding, not meeting the curious gazes of the other Vikings but idly noting one of the smaller fishing boats was gone (likely taken by Drago), then she grips the pendant tightly. For a moment nothing happens, and as she feels the strange pendant warm her hand she began to fear that maybe he wouldn't show again, like the time he'd sent the pirate (or former pirate) to help her in Neverland rather than coming himself.

Then there's a sound like an explosion as the waters of an area of the ocean in the distance blow upward and settle back down in a shower. As it clears, Elsa was able to make out a ship she had only seen once before, back in Arendelle before she was kidnapped. Frozen in disbelief for a moment, then she was hurrying down the steps, barely keeping from running as she went to the pier where the ship was docking. The remodeled fishing boat looked as though it had been through some action since she'd given it to him to replace the wreck he'd arrived in Arendelle in, but her eyes were not for the vessel but rather the handsome yet still strangely dressed man who stepped from it.

Before she could reach him, however, her steps stuttered and slowed when he turned towards to her and she caught sight of his eyes. In many ways the look he had was much the same as what he had upon that first meeting. However, the pain and sadness wasn't so buried this time, showing much more close to the surface along with something else as well: guilt. As the pieces came together, Elsa came to a shocking conclusion: he knew. The realization that Julian was aware of what she and Anna had went through in Neverland, New York, and the Earth Kingdom brought back those horrible memories, and Elsa felt herself reliving the emotions she'd felt then: fear, hopelessness, and especially anger.

The air resonated with a sound crack, and the onlooking Vikings groaned in sympathy as Elsa cradled the throbbing hand she'd just slapped Julian with. As he turned his gaze back towards her, Julian didn't look shocked or angry: he simply had that same apologetic look in his eyes, and that made Elsa even angrier. Balling her fists Elsa began to beat on his chest, and he still didn't react or do

anything to defend himself. Julian simply stood there and took it, blast him. Of course she probably wasn't doing him any real damage with her bare fists, but she was too angry to concentrate on using her powers or to care enough to try and stop the flow of angry tears coming from her eyes.

As the beating continued, Elsa started to scream at him, "You know what Anna and I have been through since you left? I was kidnapped by pirates and we had to defend an island of fairies against them! Then we were sent to a strange land, where we beaten and tortured by a bunch of hateful men in hoods! Then I had to fight against a crazy lady who wound up killing Anna in front of me! Do you understand!? That Princess Azula had killed Anna, and you could have stopped her, but you weren't there! Why, why weren't you there, Julian!? Why!?"

Her anger and energy finally exhausted, Elsa rested her balled fists against his chest, her head falling forward against her fists as she collapsed into racking sobs. "Elsa," she heard Anna say sympathetically, but it was Julian's comforting grip she felt supporting her across her shoulders and stroking her hair. "I'm so, so sorry you had to go through that Elsa. If I had thought you would not have been able to get home from Neverland, that those things would have befallen you, then I would have come to escort you myself. But As I've told you before I'm only human, and I've come to believe there's a reason the future's next to impossible for me to see."

"Why didn't you come?" Elsa asked him, not moving from her position, "Why did you send that pirate instead?"

"Captain Turner isn't a pirate. He hadn't been one for many years, ever since his death and even before then he hadn't been one for all that long, instead spending most of his life making an honest life as a blacksmith," Julian clarified, though his tone of voice made it sound as though he was still sorry about what happened, "In that, he's much like Chief Hiccup over there. As for why I didn't come when you called back then, I felt an urgent situation somewhere and I was afraid I wouldn't have the time to take care of both myself. Besides, I felt the Flying Dutchman would make a much bigger impression of those superstitious pirates than I could have, and considering how quickly I'd heard they'd made themselves scarce it seems I was right."

"But what was so urgent that it kept you away?" Elsa asked him again, her head still swirling in turmoil.

"To put it simply, the life of a young man was at stake," Julian told her, "You see, the cuckoo clock that had served as a replacement for his heart since he was a baby was broken, and without a replacement he was going to die."

"Hisâ€¦.what!?" Elsa pulled back to look him in the face, unsure of whether or not he was making fun of her with such a ridiculous statement.

"I know, it seems strange. If I hadn't seen it for myself I would not have believed it myself, and with all the unusual things I've seen in my journeys that's saying something," Julian told her, "But I swear it's true. I had sacrificed my best pocket watch for the surgery, and

for a while I wasn't sure that it was going to work. However, it seems his late adoptive mother was as brilliant a nursemaid and surgeon as she was in raising that boy, and his body ended up accepting the new timepiece just fine. After that I went to help some young heroes save their city, their world from an invasion from another universe. Their leader had just put the kibosh to the invaders' plans when I got your recent call."

"But on your way here you had seen what happened to us between Neverland and here, right? I recall you had mentioned you had an ability like that back in Arendelle," Elsa heard Anna ask him, and Elsa say she looked as puzzled as she sounded, "So why didn't you go instead to New York before we'd left instead of here, or even catch us before we even left Neverland?"

"Believe me, Princess Anna, I was tempted, and I did come close to changing my course to try and prevent what'd happened to you," Julian answered her, "But every time I've tried to change what I've seen having happened, no matter how noble my intentions were, it's always ended disastrously and everyone wound up worse than if I've left things as they were. The best I could hope to do was to study the past and learn how things went wrong, so as that I can do my best to reverse the ill effects in the present and give those wronged a better future. I'm truly sorry for what had happened to you both, and I know it's a poor apology compared to what you went through, but I'm here now to bring you back home to your families and your people."

"The way you're talking it sounds you won't be staying this time either," Elsa said to him.

"I'm afraid not," Julian told her, "I still have to find my own way home and answer for my actions there before I can let myself settle elsewhere. I'm sorry."

"Do I have your permission to hit him, my Queen?" Kristoff asked as he walked up towards them, his eyes narrowed and his arms crossed.

Elsa sighed and said, "No. I suppose I understand where he's coming from, and we do need to get back home before someone like Hans decides to take advantage of our absence."

"So that means you're leaving us already?" Hiccup asked as he and the other Vikings made their way up the pier.

"Yes, I'm afraid so," Elsa told him remorsefully, "The four of us have been away from my people long enough. It's long past time for me to return to them."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I was kinda hoping that you would stay for the wedding," Hiccup told her, then Astrid gasped as Hiccup knelt before her and produced the ring from where it was stored on his suit as he added, "that is, if Astrid would have me."

"Are you serious?" Astrid breathed, her hand over her mouth.

"Well I was hoping to do this somewhere in a more private and romantic location," Hiccup waffled, "but then Drago made a mess of all that, and now our new friends are getting ready to leave and we

don't know when or if we'll see them againâ€|"

"Yes!" Astrid interrupted him as she pulled him up into a bone crushing hug, "Of course I'll marry you!" Then they kissed as the village around them cheered their support. Elsa smiled at them both, then she looked past them to the cliffside, where Aurora and Thunderhead were looking down at them with what appeared to be sad expressions. Elsa made her way through the crowd, with Anna and Kristoff following closely behind, and made it to the stairs before the two dragons hopped down to meet them and nuzzled them affectionately. Elsa stroked the top of her head in return as she said sadly, "I'm gonna miss you, Aurora."

"Yeah, me too Thunderhead," Anna agreed as she wiped away a tear of her own.

Hiccup and Astrid held hands as they approached and Hiccup asked them, "Why not just take them with you where you're going?"

"Oh no, I couldn'tâ€|.I mean we couldn't possiblyâ€|" Anna hurriedly declined, "â€|I mean none of us know the first thing about taking care of dragons!"

"Well many Dragons, especially ones of the Tidal Class like your Thunderhead, pretty much live off of fish they get for themselves in the ocean," Valka informed them.

"As for your Aurora," Hiccup told Elsa, "the Flightmare's primary food source is a special algae that grows in flowing streams and glows when Arvindal's Fire is in the sky."

"Well I'm pretty sure that we don't have anything like that back home," Elsa argued, trying to make them see why it'd be better for the dragons if they left them here.

"Sure you do," Thor argued back, "There's a stream that would meet Aurora's needs just a short walking distance from the area you call the Valley of Living Stones."

"But how would we get them home?" Anna asked, "They couldn't possibly fly there, and I doubt that Julian's ship is large enough to hold them."

"Just take one of our ships then," Stoick offered, "It's the least we could do after you helped save our village, and it'll serve you better than that dinky little rowboat there."

"Did you guys miss the part where I said there aren't any dragons back where I live?" Elsa tried to reason with them, "If they come with us, then what will they do for companionship?"

"Truth is I haven't seen another Flightmare since I started working with the dragons at the nest to try and stymie Drago's 'recruitment' into his dragon army," Valka told her, "In fact, Aurora may be as rare as Toothless, and if you leave her here alone she'll just be that much lonelier."

"And while he may miss his family if he goes, I'm certain that Thunderhead would miss you even worse if he's forced to stay," Hiccup added.

"His name's Lloyd," Tuffnut argued, which prompts a growl out of Thunderhead before Anna strokes his head comfortingly while she tells the twins, "I don't think that he cares for that name."

Stoick chuckles once before telling Elsa and her friends, "I'm afraid there's no arguing with them. Both my wife and son are even more hardheaded than me in these things, and they're both usually right."

Elsa sighed as her last argument was shot down, then she turned towards Aurora and asked, "Well, girl, what do you say? Do you want to go home with me?"

Aurora's response was as enthusiastic as it was humorous, as the dragon began licking her vigorously, practically knocking her down amidst the village's laughter, and Elsa couldn't help laughing herself as she protested, "Okay! No, stop that!"

Hiccup laughed as well as he told her, "You better get used to that."

The preparations for departure didn't take long, though the Vikings seemed to be just as dumbstruck by Julian's electromagnetic moving of his belongings and the steel plating from his old ship to the new one as they had been by her own arrival. Less inclined to violence though, but Elsa chalked that one up to her arriving together with a wounded Hiccup. As she and Anna looked down over the ship's railing at Hiccup and his family, Elsa asked them, "So have you guys thought about what your child's name will be will be?"

"A bit," Hiccup told them, "If it's a boy, we were thinking about maybe either Finn after Astrid's uncle or Stoick, after my dad."

"How about Hakon?" Kristoff suggested, "That's a good strong name."

"Ugh, no thanks," Astrid grunted in disgust, "I actually have an uncle on my mom's side named Hakon, or I would if he hadn't practically disowned our whole family. Thinks we're all traitors to our ancestors for settling down in a village rather than carrying on the 'tradition' of looting and pillaging, so he wound up starting his own tribe. Last I heard he was looking to sack some castle in Scotland. Barbarian."

"Oh, sorry about that," Kristoff apologized, and Elsa considered what Astrid just revealed. _A Viking group attacking a castle in Scotland? _Elsa thought to herself, _It can't beâ€|_

"As for if it's a girl, I was thinking about something for someone who'd be both strong and beautiful," Astrid said, cutting into her thoughts, "so I hope you don't mind if we name her after you, Elsa."

Elsa teared up a bit as she said in a thick voice, "I would be honored."

As Thor walked up to see Elsa and her friends up, Hiccup removed his shield and held it up to him as he said, "You probably are wanting

this back now, Lord Thor. Here you go."

Thor smiled and shook his head and said, "No, that isn't mine, and although it was repaired in Asgard it didn't come from there. It actually belongs to a friend and comrade in arms of mine."

"Oh," Hiccup replied, then he held it up again and said, "Did you want to take it back to him?"

"That's fine, it'll be a good many years before he'll need it back again, and I'm sure he'd be honored someone like you is putting it to such good use," Thor answered, "Just keep it safe and I'll make sure it gets back to him when he needs it again. Not that you have to worry too much about damaging it or anything. I know, I tried."

Hiccup smiled with an awestruck expression, then he nodded and hung the shield on his back.

"Our village, and our family especially owes you folks so much," Valka tells Elsa and her friends gratefully, "We cannot thank you enough."

Stoick nodded as he added, "Yes, should you need our help, for anything, just let us know and we'll be there."

Elsa smiled and nodded, although she didn't know just how many years separated them or how she'd manage to contact them again in that event.

"Take care, Queen Elsa," Hiccup said with a formal salute.

"And you, Chief Hiccup," Elsa replied with a small curtsey.

Then Julian unfurled the sails and the ship sailed out into the ocean. Elsa looked down into the ship's hold to check on the dragons there, who seemed to be taking the voyage easily enough. Then, once they were far enough out, Elsa created an ice dome over them all while Julian used his power to create a portal on the water's surface on their portside, then Elsa felt some disorientation as Julian rolled the ship into it.

* * *

><p>Back in Arrendaleâ€¦|

It had taken longer than he'd anticipated to be ready, due largely to the huge number of volunteers who'd wanted to help sail out to search for their Queen and Princess, as well as the necessity to sort out who was fit for sailing and who wasn't, but by the time the sky was darkening again they were ready. As the Aurora Borealis danced in the sky overhead, Elsa's father hugged his wife Katara as she told him, "Now you keep safe, find our children and bring them home."

"I will, I promise," he told her, "Those pirates won't keep our family apart just as we had gotten back together."

"Milord, look," a soldier told him, pointing out towards the fjord, "Something is approaching."

Elsa's father turned to look in the direction the soldier was indicating. In the fading light he spotted something in the sky over the fjord. It was too large to be a bird, yet too small to be either one of his daughters. When it got closer, he was able to better able to make out its unusual shape and its pale coloring. "Olaf?" he guessed.

"Hi Elsa and Anna's dad, Elsa and Emma's mom! I'm back!" Olaf called out as he came in for a landing, and Elsa's dad noticed a couple of small flying creatures that were similar to those that Anna had flown off with in the first place, "Sorry I was gone so long, but time flies when you're having fun." Straining his eyes, he was able to determine that these creatures were a pair of tiny ladies with delicate looking gossamer wings, one with a dress of leaves that were the same shade of blue as the dress he'd last seen Elsa wearing and whose short, spiky hair was the same color as hers as well. The other had short, blond hair and was wearing a green winter outfit that also appeared to be made of leaves and was lined with bits of cotton. Also, curiously enough, the green fairy's wings appeared to be coated with a thin layer of frost, while the blue fairy had a small snow cloud hovering over her head similar to the one Olaf had hanging over his. The green fairy said something to Olaf, though to Elsa's father's ears it sounded only like tinkling, and Olaf added, "Oh, and Tinker Bell said that time passes differently in Neverland than it does here too."

Elsa's father felt his wife relaxing next to him, but he felt it was too early for him to do so just yet. Sure he'd also heard the reports that Anna had met up with Olaf and Kristoff before flying off beyond Arendelle's borders, and Olaf's relaxed demeanor indicated that he did not have bad news, but the fact Olaf had returned alone still troubled his heart. "Where is Anna and Kristoff? And did you guys find Elsa? Was she okay?"

Olaf smiled and waved dismissively as he said, "Oh, they're all fine. Tink and the other fairies had rescued Elsa before we'd even got there, then we helped her and the fairies drive the pirates off for good. After that, Anna, Elsa, Kristoff and Sven had flown back while I remained behind to help Marshmallow get settled in. Sorry if I worried them, but as I said I lost track of time."

This new information caused Elsa's father to become concerned, and he saw that his wife and the others around them were just as worried. When the fairy Olaf had called Tinker Bell flew up to him, Elsa's father saw she looked concerned as well, but since he couldn't understand anything she was saying it was hard to tell for sure.

Apparently Olaf could understand, however, as he asked her, "Tink? What's wrong?" Tinker Bell then turned to Olaf and said something to him, after which Olaf turned towards Elsa's parents and asked, "Anna and Elsa hadn't come back yet? Tink says they should have returned by now."

"No, you were the first one back, and it's been so long now that we were starting to get really worried," Katara answered him.

"Milord, what does this mean?" one of the volunteers, a deep sea fisherman, asked him in concern.

"It means that we now have less information to go on now than we had before," he answered, "but the need to find our Queen and Princess is still very present. We'll still keep an eye out for the pirates who'd kidnapped the Queen, in the event they'd managed to recapture her and the others, but our primary concern is locating Elsa and Anna and bringing them back safe."

Elsa's father was interrupted by the sound of a tremendous splash in the fjord. Whirling around, he and the others saw as the displaced water rained back down over a vessel he'd only ever seen in illustrations of in books and old parchments. "Is that a Viking boat?" He'd heard one of the soldiers ask in confusion, "How'd it get here?"

"I've heard that the fjord was formed the way it was by an iceberg," one of the villagers suggested, "and you see that ice that's on it? Maybe it was trapped in an iceberg ages ago, and enough of the iceberg that it was still stuck in had melted so that it was freed and floated back to the surface."

Elsa's father did indeed see the ice on the ship, but oddly enough the ice only covered the top of the ship and much of the mast, the bottom being completely free of it. He wasn't sure what circumstances would result in a ship being frozen in an iceberg upside down, but before he could deliberate on it much further the ice on the ship began to quickly melt. "No, it's not melting," he corrected himself, "it's breaking up and rising into the air before dissolving. I've only seen ice behave that way once before. That means!"

The ice on the ship had finally dissolved enough to reveal figures on the deck, and when he saw who it was his heart sped even as one of the villagers cried out, "It's Queen Elsa and Princess Anna! They've returned!" Cheers and cries of exuberation broke out all around them even as Elsa's father felt his wife wrap her arms around him from behind and rest her chin on his shoulder. When he heard her sniff, he looked out of the corner of his eye to see a tear trace down her cheek and he reached a hand up to pat her comfortingly, knowing just how she felt.

As Elsa spotted them she raised her hand in greeting while Anna ran up to the railing beside her and waved even more energetically. Elsa's father also saw Kristoff standing by the mast with Sven, and he even recognized Julian at the ship's helm. So that explained why the ship appeared out of the water, even if it didn't explain why his daughters were on that ship, or how Julian had ended up with a different ship than the one his daughter had given him.

Before long the ship was docking, and even though he and his wife had seen Julian's gifts before, Elsa's father still found himself awestruck by how he could do things like securing the ship to the dock with the mooring lines without even touching them. Despite his fascination with that young man's abilities, Elsa's father soon found his attention diverted as the boarding ramp was lowered and his daughters hurried down it. As happy as he was to see them, he also found himself shocked and dismayed by what he saw on Anna's chest as she ran forward yelling, "Mom! Dad!"

"Anna!" Katara exclaimed as Anna hugged both of her parents, "You've been hurt!"

"What, this?" Anna asked simply as she released her parents to look down through the hole in her dress at the ugly scar that showed on her chest, "This is nothing. A friend already treated it and I'm fine now."

"Did the pirates do that to you?" her father asked in a dangerous tone.

"No. It wasâ€¦well, someone you wouldn't likely know," Anna told him, "It's a long story."

"But what's important is that our journey's now over," Elsa told them as she took her turn to hug them both, "and I couldn't be any happier to be back home with you."

"Same here," her father agreed, then he turned towards Julian, who was disembarking right behind Kristoff, and said to him, "It seems that we owe you once again for bringing our family back together."

"It was nothing," Julian assured them modestly, "I merely gave them a ride back home is all."

"But where did you find them?" Katara asked Julian, "And how did you end up with a Viking vessel instead of the ship Elsa gave to you?"

"That all is also a bit of a long story," Julian told her, "But as for the ship, the short answer to that is that I needed the extra cargo space for this trip, so I traded it."

"You needed the space?" Katara asked him in confusion, "For what?"

"Monster!" one of the citizens yelled in fright. When Elsa's father looked in the direction the lady was pointing, his eyes widened and his jaw dropped. Climbing out of the ship's hold was a couple of beasts straight out of legend. Huge and reptilian in appearance, one was purple and scaly while the other appeared to glow blue from within. He didn't know why Julian would need such creatures aboard his ship, or even if he knew they were there when he traded for the boat, but he wasn't about to let them endanger his countrymen much less his own daughters.

As he reached for his sheathed sword, Anna grabbed his arm while Elsa stood between the soldiers and the ship as Elsa said, "Everyone please calm down. Dad, it's all right. They're just Anna's and my dragons."

Elsa's father looked at Elsa as if she were speaking in tongues as he said in confusion, "Those are yourâ€¦what!?"

Elsa stroked the muzzle of the blue dragon as she told her father, "Our dragons. This beautiful girl of mine is Aurora, while the other is Anna's and he goes by the name Thunderhead. Neither of them is a fire breathing type, and Anna's eats fish while mine eats algae, so you don't have to worry about them. I know it's all a bit strange and confusing, but it'sâ€¦"

" 'â€¦a long story'?" Katara guessed with a slight smile.

"Actually, it's all part of the same long story," Elsa confirmed with her own smile, "I'd love to fill you in later, but after what all we've went through I'd like to just take a bit of quiet time to just relax if that's all right."

"Of course. Take as long as you need, dear. I can keep things going in the meantime," Elsa's father told her.

"Thanks, Dad," Elsa told him gratefully, then she heard scrabbling behind her on the ship's deck. Looking he saw Aurora prancing as she quickly back and forth between her and the mountains in the distance. Elsa guessed that Aurora must have caught the scent of the stream Thor had mentioned. "Go on ahead, girl," Elsa told Aurora, "I'll catch up with you later."

Aurora licked Elsa, then flew off towards the mountains. Elsa watched her fly for a while, then she went and hugged her parents again as she said, "It just feels so good to finally be back home."

* * *

><p>Meanwhile, in a clearing near the Valley of Living Stonesâ€|

The snowy field is quiet and calm, the commotion of the celebration held in the town far below unable to be heard. Then the calm. Then the calm is disrupted with the appearance of a swirling vortex opening in mid air. After a moment, a number of objects are expelled violently from it, including a bunch of broken furniture parts, a pair of shattered brooms, and a couple who appeared to be in their late teens. As the boy pushed himself to his hands and knees, he asked, "Are you all right?"

"I think so, but what happened? Where are we?" the girl replied as she brushed the snow out of her ginger-colored hair, correcting herself as she corrected herself by saying, "_When_ are we?"

The boy placed a hand on his head, which shifted his hair and revealed a bolt-shaped scar on his forehead as he answered, "I don't know, Ginny. I don't know."

Not the endâ€|

* * *

><p>Foreword

Thanks to those of you who've followed along with me this far and have been patient while I tried to split my free time I wasn't at work between my various stories. Of course I'm sure that some of you who had started with this story may be confused with some of the names used herein more so than those who had read all of the Elsa stories I've written up until now. I'll do my best to help clarify down below, and if anyone has any questions I'll add those here later.

Katara (Elsa and Anna's mother): I'm aware that on the recent season of Once Upon a Time the writers of the show had given her a different name (Ingrid or something), but at the time I started writing these

stories she was as of yet unnamed. For reasons of my own, I chose to give her this name back in the conclusion of "Cold War". Just to be clear here, she should not be confused with the character from Avatar: The Last Airbender.

Aurora (Elsa's Flightmare): I'm sure many of you guessed that Elsa named her after the Aurora Borealis (a.k.a. Arvindal's Fire). Of course I don't think many people would confuse her with the princess from Sleeping Beauty and Maleficent. No, I imagine the confusion would stem from whether or not this dragon was in fact the same one that was referred to as the Hofferson's Bane in the Defenders of Berk episode Fright of Passage. I've become aware that the Dragon Wiki has it listed as being a male, but I don't know if that information was in fact confirmed as being correct, and I don't recall the characters ever referring to its sex during the episode (and even if they had, how would they have been able to tell for sure in the middle of a fight like that). Therefore, I'll leave it to the readers to decide whether or not it was for themselves.

Next, this is in response to the guest review left by Atlas (due to the fact I can't respond directly to guest reviews). First of all, it was a Thunderdrum that Anna had got, not a Skrill. I had briefly considered giving Anna a Skrill, just for the sheer firepower and all, but I couldn't think of how Drago would be able to have captured it and brought it to Berk or even how it would arrive at Berk in a friendly manner, much less how Anna would be able to forge a bond with it. On the other hand, the Thunderdrum triplets and their surrogate father Thornado are already friendly towards Berk (largely due to Thornado being Stoic's old Thunderdrum companion). Additionally, the Thunderdrum named Thunderhead (formerly known as Lloyd) is a more naturally perfect companion for Anna to his energetic and loving nature (not to mention that, like her, he can be rather stubborn and loud).

As for Julian's actions, I understand why some might be irked by the fact that he didn't use what he saw on his way there to Berk to change his course and instead retrieve her and her friends from what they had went through. However, while his talent of using his gift to see the past and present through windows he creates or during his travels through the time-stream certainly is handy, his ability to see the future is clouded at best, and most of the time it's non-existent. Furthermore, if you think of any movie involving alteration of events based on knowledge of the future (The Butterfly Effect, the Final Destination series, the Back to the Future series) how many times has those alterations ended for the better? Maybe not every alternate outcome has resulted in tragedy, but Julian's experiences has taught him that the future is a subject that's best left alone, as any attempt he's made of altering what future event he's seen has only ended badly, so that's why he did what he did here.

If there's any other questions you may have, then let me know and I'll do my best to answer them. Once again, thank you for reading and I hope to have more for you soon.

End
file.